

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE
STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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KIT CARSON'S LITTLE SCOUT; OR THE RENEGADE'S DOOM. *By AN OLD SCOUT.*



One Indian remained. He was facing Burke. "Ugh! Little Hand is a traitor," he said, glaring at the youth who covered him with his pistol. "Am I a Piute?" Burke asked indignantly. "How am I a traitor? I am on the war path."

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Kit Carson's Little Scout

OR,

THE RENEGADE'S DOOM.

BY AN OLD SCOUT.

CHAPTER I.

KIT CARSON AND BURKE MILLER.

It was a long ride, and Kit Carson's horse was almost fagged out. He had to carry certain information to Fort Laramie. It was all important that he reached that point as early as possible. But for the fact that he had to go out of his way, to avoid contact with a large party of Indians, he would have been much farther on his way. He did not want to waste any time fighting. His position as scout made it a duty to report at the fort as quickly as possible. Every one that knew Kit Carson, the greatest, grandest scout that ever lived, understood that duty, with him, was a sacred thing. It was paramount to everything else. He never shirked it, as the readers of this story will see ere they reach the end.

Night coming on, the jaded horse of the great scout began to give out. It was not his own horse—the matchless Whirlwind. That splendid animal was at Fort Laramie, recovering from a bullet wound. The one he was riding he had captured from a renegade named Dunmore, who he slew in combat three days before.

"I am sorry for you, my good horse," he said, "but I fear I must abandon you to the tender mercies of the redskins or the wolves. I can travel faster now than you can. You have done well, but you can't travel all night without rest. I must go on."

He was about to dismount in the last rays of the setting sun, when his eye caught sight of four horsemen coming toward him over the rolling prairie. They were coming fast, too. Their horses were evidently fresh.

"Oho!" he exclaimed, as he gazed at them, "they are redskins, and seek my company. I don't want any company just now except that of a good horse. I'll go to yonder piece of timber and give 'em the slip, as I have no time to waste on them."

He turned his horse's head toward the piece of timber. It was only half a mile away, while the newcomers were at least three miles distant. He therefore knew he could reach it at a leisure gait.

Seeing him turn toward the timber, the Indians increased their speed, and tried to intercept him. He made no effort to go faster, as he knew he could reach it in time. He did reach it, but not until a bullet from one of the pursuers grievously wounded his jaded horse. He dismounted in the edge of the timber, cut the horse's throat, to relieve it of long agony of suffering, and quietly waited till the attacking party rode up. Thinking he had gone into the depths of the timber, the redskins rode boldly up to within ten paces of the spot where they had seen him enter. They little dreamed of whom they had to deal with.

Crack!

A single flash of a rifle in the edge of the timber was seen, and the foremost savage tumbled from his horse shot through the heart.

The others recoiled.

Crack! Crack!

Two pistol shots rang out on the still evening air, and two more redmen went down.

The third man was not instantly killed. He went down with a yell that echoed near and far in the timber.

The fourth one was a mere stripling—a youth of perhaps sixteen or seventeen years. He seemed utterly bewildered, for he could not see the terrible foe that had wiped out his three companions.

But a moment later Kit Carson sprang into full view and sternly exclaimed:

"Surrender or die!"

"Yes—yes—I surrender!" exclaimed the youth in good English. "Thank God you are a white man!"

"Eh! What's that?"

"I am not an Indian!" said the youth, springing off his horse. "I am white like you!"

Kit looked hard at him.

"But you are painted and dressed like one," he said.

"So I am. But I am white for all that."

"But what does this mean? I am in a hurry. Speak up quick."

"My name is Burke Miller," said the youth. "My father, mother, uncle, and two brothers and myself were captured

seven years ago. I have never seen any of them since the night after our capture, and I have been with the Indians ever since. Oh, how I have wanted to get a chance to get away from them. But I couldn't. Let me go with you, please, and I can find my way back to my people in Missouri."

There were tears in the lad's eyes. The great scout's heart came up in his throat.

"Yes, by the eternal!" he exclaimed, grasping the lad's hand. "Whenever an honest white man asks Kit Carson for help and fails to get it, it's time for him to die."

"Kit Carson!" exclaimed the youth, opening wide his eyes. "Are you Kit Carson?"

"Yes; I am Kit Carson."

"Thank God! Thank God!" ejaculated the youth. "I am safe! Oh, how they do fear and hate you!"

"Who does?"

"Why, Gross, Madden, and the Indians."

"Gross! What do you know of Gross?" demanded Carson.

"Why, he is a white man, and worse than all the Indians put together," replied young Miller. "Do you know him?"

"Yes—that is, I used to know him, but have not seen or heard anything of him in several years. He is with the Indians, eh?"

"Yes, sir; and as much an Indian as any of them."

"Well, well; I am glad to get news of him. So you want to go with me, do you?"

"Oh, yes, sir. I would go anywhere in the world with you."

"Well, that's all right. Do you know how to fight Indians?"

"Yes, sir. They made me go on the warpath with them, and I have killed several warriors."

"Good—good. You look like a strong lad for your age. Can you travel all night?"

"Yes, sir, and all day, too."

"Your name?"

"Burke Miller, sir."

"All right, Burke. Here's my hand. We are friends. I am going to Laramie, and have got to travel all night. Which of these horses is the best?"

"That one over there, sir," said Burke, pointing to an iron-gray standing over his dead rider. "He is a splendid horse."

"Very well. Take your choice of the others, and we'll be off."

Burke took the next best horse, and in another moment was ready to mount. Kit Carson changed the saddle from his dead horse to the iron-gray, and then mounted.

"Now come on!" he said.

Burke urged his horse forward, and rode by the side of the great scout, who asked him many questions about the renegade Gross. The youth answered every question with a frankness and candor that charmed the scout. He was a modest-looking, blue-eyed youth, whose fair skin was hidden under the hideous warpaint of the savage.

He told the story of the capture of the two wagons of his father's party, seven years before. He was but ten years of age at the time. But he remembered how his father, prisoner as he was, quarreled with Gross, and knocked him down. Gross then, in his rage, had every one of the party tied to trees except himself, and left them there.

"There were five in all," he said; "father, uncle, mother, and my two brothers. Oh, I shall never forget my mother's screams as they led me, her youngest, away from her! I have never seen or heard of them since."

"Have you never heard any of the redskins say anything about them since?" Kit asked.

"No, sir. I would sometimes ask; but they would shake their heads at me and give no answer."

"Have you no desire to avenge your parents, young man?" he asked.

"Avenge them! Yes, sir. I did get a chance to kill one warrior, whom I saw strike my father when he was tied to the tree. I shot him dead in the woods two years ago, and none ever knew who did it. I have sworn on my knees before God, to avenge them if I ever got the chance."

"That's it! Give me your hand! You are made of the right stuff. You can go with me. I want to find Gross myself. I owe him a debt I am anxious to pay. You can have a chance at him and the red fiends with him. I never let up when once I get after a man. Do you understand, Miller?"

"Yes, sir—yes, sir, and I will follow you to death. Wherever you go I will go."

"Then we'll go together and work together. The red villains shall now have more than ever to fear."

They rode on all through the night, and at daylight reached the fort, where the old scout was gladly received by the officers.

CHAPTER II.

PURSUED.

The officers and soldiers of the fort were greatly surprised at seeing the famous scout come in accompanied by an Indian youth, as they thought. But they were still more surprised when they saw soap and water turn the young Indian into a manly-looking white lad who had a history.

They crowded around him and listened to his story with breathless interest. Such stories they often heard on the frontiers, but they were always of absorbing interest. The fact that a renegade was at the bottom of the youth's misfortunes aroused an intense indignation in every breast. But when they heard him say he was going to run with Kit Carson till he had avenged his parents, every soldier grasped his hand and bade him Godspeed.

During the two days they remained at the fort Kit Carson sold one of the two horses he and young Miller rode, and bought a complete outfit for the latter. Then they took leave of the garrison and set out again. They started in the direction they had come, and intended to make for the nearest village, where the renegade had his home.

Burke knew every inch of the country, as did the famous scout. The former knew some things of the renegade that the latter did not, hence he was useful in many ways to Kit Carson.

On the third day they were out they were pursued by a party of about a score of Indians. Kit Carson was mounted on Whirlwind, his famous horse. Burke was on the iron-gray which the scout had captured with him.

"We'll have to run for it, Burke," said Kit. "There are two dozen redskins in that party. Too many for us to tackle out here on the prairie."

"There's some timber over there on our left," said young Miller. "We can make that in time."

"Yes. I think we can. You are not afraid of them, are you?"

"No, sir! I wouldn't be afraid of a thousand of them."

"All right, then. Come on."

They put spurs to their horses and made a dash for the timber, three miles away.

The Indians at once divined the object of their movement, and made a desperate effort to intercept them.

The race became exciting.

It looked as though both parties would meet at the edge of the timber.

"Faster!" urged Kit to his companion, as they neared the timber.

Crack! went a savage's rifle, and a bullet whistled close by Kit's head.

Crack!
Crack!

Two more bullets whistled by in quick succession, and still all were going at a tremendous speed toward the timber. Suddenly young Burke leveled his rifle and fired.

Down went the foremost redskin, falling under the feet of his companions' horses.

"Good!" exclaimed Kit to the youth. "That was well done!"

Crack!
Crack!

Two more savage rifles sent bullets flying uncomfortably close to our heroes, and Kit thought it time to respond himself.

The old scout never missed his aim when he drew a bead. That was one secret of the terror he inspired in the savage breast.

The keen crack of his rifle was followed by a death-yell, and a dusky warrior tumbled to the ground from the saddle.

"Now for the woods!" said Kit.

Both made a dash, and entered the timber just about a minute or so before the redskins did.

"Now stop. We have four pistols. They will rush up in disorder, thinking we have gone through. We can wipe out four of them, and then get away before they recover from the surprise. Better follow me when we start."

"Yes, sir!" responded Burke, drawing his two pistols.

Up dashed the redskins right into the bushes, thinking the two whites had dashed on through.

Crack!
Crack!
Crack!
Crack!

The four pistols went off in such rapid succession, dropping a warrior at each shot, that the redskins feared they had fallen into an ambush. They gave a yell of terror and dashed back out into the prairie again, leaving four of their number weltering in blood in the edge of the timber.

"Now, come away—quick!" said Kit, and away they dashed through the timber, getting a quarter of a mile the start of their pursuers ere they recovered from their surprise.

"You did well, Burke," said Kit, when they were out of hearing of the redskins. "I am glad to find you such a brave, cool young man under fire. Kit Carson is your friend always. Depend on that," and he gave Burke his hand, which the latter took and shook most cordially.

"We must shake them off, or they'll follow us all the afternoon!" said Kit, after they had gone a mile or so.

"They'll follow our trail till night stops 'em," said Burke.

"Yes, you are right," was the reply. "But we must confuse the trail and throw them off."

"How will we do that, sir?"

"I don't know yet, but I guess we'll find some way to do it."

Burke Miller had unbounded faith in the famous scout, and was willing to blindly follow his lead in any direction.

They pushed on through the timber till they reached the other side of it.

"Now we must turn down to the left and cross the timber again," said the old scout. "They will have much to impede their pursuit through the timber. If we go out on the prairie, they can follow as fast as we can lead."

"Yes, sir," said Burke.

They turned down several hundred yards to the left and re-entered the timber again. To push their way through to where they first started was their purpose. Having no trail

to follow, they could and did make good time. The redskins, having to follow their trail, could not make very fast time. Thus the two scouts gained steadily. They were persevering, however. The two men who slew six of their number were not to be allowed to escape without a desperate effort to kill or capture them.

When they reached the other side of the timber again the two scouts made another detour, for the purpose of deceiving their pursuers, and re-entered the woods a mile further south. But in so doing they suddenly ran across another party of redskins in the timber.

Fortunately the Indians did not see them, though they passed within pistol-shot range.

"When we get through," said Kit Carson, "we must make a break for that timber, seven miles distant. I can outrun them with Whirlwind, but I am not so sure about your horse."

"Oh, I think he can outrun any horse they have," said Burke.

"Well, I think we have got an hour's start of them now, so come on."

They reached the edge of the timber, and made a dash across toward another piece of timber about seven miles away.

Their horses went at a swinging gait, and when they reached the timber they looked back and found that the redskins had not yet struck out after them.

"We now have another chance; we must hurry across this timber and make another dash for one still beyond," remarked Kit Carson.

Burke wondered why he didn't stop and offer battle to the redskins.

To him all Indians were alike—all fiends incarnate, deserving death at sight on general principles.

But he followed the great scout with a blind faith that he knew was best to do under the circumstances.

They crossed the timber and pushed on for the third one, about five miles beyond. That they soon reached, and then, as the sun was sinking beyond the treetops, they concluded to camp there till morning.

"We can't have any fire, you know," said Kit to his young comrade, "for that would tell them of our whereabouts."

"I know that, sir," was the quiet reply. "But maybe they will have one."

Kit gave him a quick glance.

"Well, what if they do?" he asked.

"We can knock over a few of them."

"Good! We'll look out for their fire," and the famous scout dismounted and left his horse to graze at leisure. Burke followed his example, knowing that his horse would remain with Whirlwind.

They remained in the edge of the timber and watched for the appearance of the enemy. Just as the sun was disappearing below the horizon they saw them come out of the timber five miles away and make a dash across the prairie.

"We'll have to keep moving till it gets too dark for them to see our trail," said Kit, remounting his horse. Burke followed his example, and together they moved across the timber to the west side, turned southward, re-entered again, and pushed on to the east side.

By this time it was too dark for the Indians to see the trail of the two scouts. They then had no more fears of the pursuit.

"Now we can let our horses rest and graze," said Kit, "and after an hour or two look for their campfire."

That just suited young Burke Miller. He was nursing an all-consuming desire to avenge his parents, though he knew not whether they were dead or alive.

How long he lay there on the ground he knew not, but he was aroused by the voice of Kit Carson, saying:

"Come on; I think I have located their campfire."

Burke sprang to his feet and quietly followed him. Whirlwind followed close behind them, and the iron-gray kept up with Whirlwind.

They went about a half mile and halted. There was a gleam of light on the trees ahead of them. They knew that some kind of a camp was there, and prepared to creep forward and reconnoiter.

CHAPTER III.

BURKE MILLER'S OATH.

Whispering to Whirlwind to "stand there," the famous scout crept forward.

The horse stood perfectly still in his tracks, and the iron-gray stood beside him.

Burke followed him, and in a few minutes they came in sight of the campfire. A dozen savages were sitting around it. They were in a bad humor, for they looked glum and ill-natured.

"They are Shoshones," whispered Burke.

"Yes, I know it."

"Bad ones, too."

"Never saw a good one in my life," whispered Kit.

"No—there isn't any in that tribe. What are you going to do now?"

"Wait."

Burke did wait for nearly an hour, and then the savages began to make preparations to sleep.

"Let them go to sleep," said Kit, "and then we can attend to them."

Burke nodded his acquiescence, and then the two lay down in the thicket to await till the drowsy god of sleep had caught up the dusky warriors.

Of course they had out a sentinel. But Indian sentinels are very different from regular military sentinels. When they lie down in camp, when on the warpath, one of their number sits and leans against a tree, if one is conveniently near the outskirts of the camp, like a soldier on guard would do. He sits and leans against a tree, if one is conveniently near the fire, in the very midst of the sleepers, sometimes covering himself with a blanket, and hangs his head in deep study of the past, present or future of his career.

Kit and Burke well knew these characteristics of the red-men, and therefore wanted to take advantage of it.

When all the warriors were awake, no one could tell which one was on guard. But when they all slept, the one who was sitting up by the fire was the sentinel.

At last they were all asleep. Even the guard seemed half asleep. There were eleven warriors stretched out on the ground. They were soundly sleeping.

Motioning to Burke to draw his knife, Kit commenced creeping forward, keeping the tree against which the guard was sitting between him and the sentinel. Slowly but surely they advanced, making no noise—not even the breaking of a twig, and in time reached the tree. Softly Kit crept round it, and saw that the sentinel was entirely unsuspecting of danger. Raising his heavy knife above his head, the stalwart scout brought it down on the back of the guard's neck with such tremendous force as to almost sever his head from his body.

Of course, he couldn't yell.

He couldn't even groan.

All he could do was to roll over on the ground and die, and that he did without making any fuss about it.

The blow, however, waked up another, but before he could open his eyes to take in the situation, Burke Miller drew his bowie across his throat, severing windpipe and jugular. He failed to make any noise, and as the others fell an easy prey to the remorseless enemy of their race, the work was soon over save one lone warrior. Kit motioned to Burke to spare him, and the young scout desisted.

Kit then stole noiselessly away from the glare of the campfire, following him.

"When they were in the gloomy shadow of the trees again," Burke asked:

"Why did you spare the last one?"

"To spread the terror of our names among his people," was the reply.

"Oh—I see—yes," and the reason seemed perfectly satisfactory to the young scout.

After waiting some time they concluded to wake up the remaining warrior, and let him discover the fate of his comrades.

Kit picked up a small pebble and threw it at him. It struck him on the chest, and he awoke with a start. Springing up to a sitting posture, the dumfounded redskin glared around at his dead companions like one in a dream. His eyes wandered from one to the other, and then around at the shadowy trees. A great fear overcame him. He arose, folded his blanket about him, and stalked away into the forest like one on whom a giant despair had fastened itself.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Kit Carson, loud enough to be heard a quarter of a mile away. "Tell the Shoshones that Kit Carson slays his enemies!"

The savage disappeared and was seen no more.

"That's the last of him, Burke," said Kit. "Now we can get some of their rations. I am very hungry."

They went to the campfire and found plenty of smoked beef and parched corn, on which our heroes feasted to their hearts' content.

"This is even better than I expected, Burke," said the famous scout, as he munched his corn.

"Yes, sir. I didn't hope for so much success," said Burke very quietly.

"I wanted to see if you were equal to the task, my lad," remarked Burke's companion. "I have no more doubt of you. I wouldn't be afraid of an enemy behind me with you to look after him. Henceforth you are Kit Carson's little scout against the world. I'll do my best to help you find out what became of your parents."

"Thank you, sir," was all the brave youth could say. His heart was up in his mouth. Henceforth he would be the most staunch friend the famous scout could boast of.

After talking for some time the two scouts lay down by the fire and slept soundly till morning. They well knew there were no other Indians in the timber, and so had no fears as to the result of their having no guard.

They were awakened by the chirping of the birds. The sun was just gilding the tops of the trees when they opened their eyes.

The first thing that greeted them as they woke up was the ghastly sight of eleven dead Indians lying around them.

"This isn't a pleasant sight on an empty stomach, is it?" Kit asked of his young companion.

"I like to see dead Indians," replied Burke. "There's nothing on earth I hate so much."

Kit smiled, and thought that as years came to the youth he would be the worst and most unrelenting enemy the Indians ever had.

They made a breakfast off the smoked buffalo meat and parched corn which they found in the camp. Then they concluded to get their horses and resume their trip.

Kit gave a shrill, peculiar whistle, and a moment later Whirlwind came charging like a thunderbolt through the timber. The gray followed close at his heels.

"They are all right," remarked Kit, as he looked at them. "They have had both rest and food in abundance. Come on, now. We will walk part of the way through here."

He led the way and Burke followed.

Ere they had gone a hundred yards Burke stopped and looked around like one in a dream.

"What's the matter?" Kit asked.

"This place seems strangely familiar to me," he replied.

"Have you ever been in this timber before?"

"I don't know. Everything looks as though I have, and yet I cannot exactly remember. Let's go up this little hollow here."

Kit led the way.

Burke followed.

"I surely have been here before," Burke remarked, as he trod close on the heels of the famous scout.

Suddenly they reached a small clearing in the timber. Kit stepped out into it and looked up at the blue sky. Burke glared around like one in a dream.

"Oh, my God, look there!" cried Burke, pointing across the little clearing. "Oh, my poor mother! My poor father and brothers!"

Kit looked in the direction indicated, and staggered back as though stricken a powerful blow. Tied to five trees in front of him were five grinning skeletons, whose dry bones, were almost snow-white. They were held there by strong rawhide thongs, and at their feet lay remnants of wearing apparel that had evidently fallen from the skeletons.

A hoarse cry burst from Burke Miller.

"They are my parents, uncle and brothers! This is where I last saw them. They were left to perish by that renegade fiend! Hear me, father, mother! I swear by the love I bore you to avenge your cruel fate!"

"Amen!" cried Kit.

CHAPTER. IV.

BURKE MILLER'S GRIEF.

Kit Carson was held spellbound to the spot by the ghastly spectacle. He could not take his gaze from it for several minutes. In his imagination he seemed to view the awful tragedy which those five white skeletons so eloquently proclaimed.

Suddenly he was recalled to himself by the sobs of the young scout. He looked around and beheld young Burke Miller down on his knees, his face buried in both hands, and his whole frame quivering with grief.

Instantly Kit Carson's great heart was touched. Tears came into his eyes as he beheld the grief of the brave youth.

"My friend," he said, laying a hand on Burke's shoulder, "I feel for you. Words are cheap. I will help you avenge them. We will mark this spot and wreak a terrible vengeance on the miscreants who did this thing."

Burke sprang to his feet and grasped Kit Carson's hand.

"Yes," he said, pressing back the tears. "I will wreak a terrible vengeance. I didn't know they were really dead till now, though I feared it all along. That renegade Gross is at the bottom of this. It is his work. My work has just commenced. Henceforth I will spare no redman in my vengeance. They are fiends, all."

"Are you really sure that these are your people?" Kit asked.

"Yes, they stand just as I saw them last. This was my

father. This my uncle, and these my brothers Henry and Joe. Here's father's shoes. 'I would know them among a thousand old shoes. Here's an old pocket-knife he carried rusted beyond recognition now. Here's one of mother's fingers gone, where they cut it off to get her wedding ring," and unable longer to endure the sight, the youth burst into tears again and turned away.

Kit Carson sat down on a log and waited for his grief to subside. A half hour passed in profound silence, broken only by the sobs of the daring young scout.

Then, as if a sudden thought had occurred to him, he sprang up and glanced hurriedly around the little clearing.

"That's the place," he said, and, walking over to a well-shaded little nook, he commenced digging in the ground with the point of the bowie-knife. The earth was quite loamy and soft there. He soon had a six-foot trench dug some two or three feet deep.

Burke Miller finally raised his head and looked around at him. He understood at once what it meant. It was a grave he was digging.

He rose up, staggered over to the spot, and said, hoarsely: "I will help you," and, drawing his knife, he went to digging also.

For upwards of an hour they toiled there without uttering a word. The grave was now deep enough.

"That will do," said Kit. "Wait till I return," and he got out of the pit and started in the direction of his horse.

He soon returned with his blanket, which he spread on the ground in front of the skeletons.

"We must roll them in it," he said to Burke.

"Yes, yes; that's right," and Burke came forward and assisted him.

They cut loose the skeleton of his father first, and gently laid it on the outspread blanket. Then they placed the wife and mother beside it. The others followed, and then the blanket was carefully wrapped about them. Taking up the burden of bones, they bore it tenderly to the new-made grave and laid it therein.

Burke knelt by the side of the grave and hung his head in silent prayer. Kit knelt by his side and uncovered his head.

Who can fathom the thoughts that flashed through the minds of those two lion-hearted men? Did they pray for the red sea of blood through which they afterwards waded in their work of vengeance? Only the Great Unknown can reveal it, for both men now sleep the sleep that knows no waking, and their spirits flock with the heroes that have preceded them to the spirit world.

Rising to their feet, the two commenced throwing back the loose earth into the grave. Neither of them spoke. They used their hands, for they had no spades. But such men never faltered for want of implements of any kind. They had infinite resources, and were equal to every emergency.

When the grave was filled up, leaves were thrown over the spot, to make it appear as if the earth had not been disturbed.

Then, their task done, Burke grasped Kit's hand, pressed it, and said, "Thanks."

That was enough between two such brave hearts.

Kit returned the pressure of the hand without uttering a word, and then they took up their rifles and marched silently back to their horses.

They mounted and rode away from the spot. Burke looked around as he went along so as to impress upon his memory every tree, log and rock in the piece of timber.

When they reached the edge of the timber and looked out on the broad prairie, they saw a small party of seven Indians about two miles away, riding leisurely along.

"Shall we go out and meet them, Burke?" Kit asked of his little scout.

"Yes, yes; oh, if I could get at the whole tribe!"

"Now, look here, Burke," cautioned Kit, "if you go in hot-headed you'll get wiped out in a flash. Just keep cool and you'll have your full measure of vengeance. Come on, now, and keep cool."

They rode out on the prairie, and in a few minutes the seven Indians saw them. Of course the red rascals made direct for them.

"Keep cool," said Kit, "but be ready for hot work. We'll pretend to be surprised at their interference with us. When they give us cause, a pistol in each hand will lay out four at once. We can then manage the other three without any trouble."

Burke said not a word, and Kit knew he understood all he said to him.

The seven savages came prancing up on their ponies and surrounded Kit and Burke.

"Hello, redskins!" said Kit, in a free, offhand manner, "what's the news?"

"Ugh!" grunted the leader, "who paleface?"

"I am a hunter," replied Kit. "Who are you?"

"Me great brave. Me Big Wolf—ugh!"

"Big Wolf, eh? Well, if I were you I'd change my name, for the wolf is a very cowardly dog, you know."

"Ugh, Big Wolf great brave. Paleface is his prisoner."

"What for? Your people are not at war with my people. I don't want any trouble with you or your people, and you——"

"Ugh! Paleface talk too much. Big Wolf take him home with him——"

"See here, you yellow-bellied horse thief," said Kit, as Big Wolf attempted to lay hands on him. "Do you want to visit the happy hunting-ground of your people?"

"Heap big talk. Me take paleface scalp and——"

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Four pistol shots rang out almost as one shot, and four redskins reeled out of their saddles and fell to the ground.

The other three uttered terrific yells and prepared to fire. But the two scouts were too quick for them.

Crack!

Crack!

Two rifle shots settled two more, and then there was but one left. He looked down at his writhing companions on the ground and a feeling of lonesomeness came over him.

"Ugh!" he grunted. "Palefaces great braves—kill 'um all redmans. Me go away—no bodder palefaces," and he started to leave.

"Stop!" hissed Burke. "Don't you move an inch!"

Kit rode up to the savage and asked:

"Why don't you fools let white people alone? We were not troubling you, and yet your Big Wolf wanted to take me prisoner."

"Ugh—Big Wolf heap big fool!" grunted the Indian.

"So he was, but why did you not find that out before now? When you are all killed off but one that last redskin will come to the wise conclusion that they were all fools. But then it will be too late."

"Ugh—paleface heap wise, Injun heap big fool!"

"Yes, and you will go and be as big a fool as ever," remarked Kit. "Your people never learn anything."

"He shall not go!" hissed Burke Miller through his clenched teeth. "He is a Piute—one of the tribe of my father's murderers!"

"Is that so? Then you may have him!" and Kit rode away to allow Burke to finish the work of death.

Quick as a flash, Burke spurred his horse alongside the red skin, and the next moment his bowie was buried to the hilt in his side.

CHAPTER V.

HIS DARING RESCUE.

Kit Carson heard the death-yell of the Piute, but did not look back to see how he met his death. He knew, however, that the young scout had finished him. That was all he cared to know.

Burke wiped the blood from his trusty knife and rode forward to overtake the famous scout.

Neither spoke for some minutes. They were busy thinking. At last Kit remarked:

"We did well that time, Burke, by keeping cool."

"Yes," was the reply. "Wiped them all out."

"Yes—not one left to tell the tale. Their rifles lie on the ground where they fell, and their ponies roam at will over the prairie."

"I wish we could wipe out the whole Piute tribe in the same way," said Burke. "I want to ask a favor of you, Mr. Carson."

"What is it, Burke? If in my power I will grant it."

"It is this: If we ever catch renegade Gross I want him given to me to do as I wish with."

"Certainly. He is yours if we ever take him alive."

"Promise me you will not kill him except to save your own life. I would rather he would escape us a dozen times than have him killed in a fight. I want him for my own vengeance."

"I will promise to respect your wishes in regard to him."

"Thanks. I ask no more."

The two men then rode forward toward the Piute country. They knew there was great peril in so doing, but they were used to perils of that kind.

"Do you know where Gross is, Burke?" Kit asked, after riding several miles in the most profound silence.

"He is in the saddle nearly all the time. I know in what village he lives when he is at home with his Indian wives. But whether he is there now is more than I can tell."

"Well, we can find out by going to his village," said Kit, after a pause, "and I guess that's the best thing to do just now."

"Yes, I think so," replied Burke. "His village is up on the South Fork of White River."

"That's only two days' ride from here, I guess. We can soon make that."

"Yes—soon make it," said Burke. "If we keep right on."

"Which we will do."

They rode forward without interruption till they struck a strip of timber that skirted the course of a small stream. The sun was but an hour high when they struck the timber.

"I guess we'd better spend the night here," suggested Kit, "where we can have both water and shelter."

"Yes," returned Burke. "I know a spring where the Piutes always stop when they pass this timber."

"That's just where we want to stop, then."

Burke led the way about two miles farther up the timber till they reached the spring.

It was quite a bold spring, springing up from under a large flat rock. The water was clear, cold and sweet. The Piutes called it the "Sweet Water, and it was known among all the roving bands for hundreds of miles around.

Burke and Kit satisfied their thirst and then retired some distance into the thicket. They didn't want to be in the way of any roving band that might come along.

Eating an Indian supper of parched corn and buffalo meat, the two scouts laid themselves down on the grass to snatch a few hours' sleep. Such men fall to sleep easily, and are very easily awakened.

Both men were awakened at midnight, after four or five hours' sleep, by sounds of boisterous laughter down at the spring.

"Indians," whispered Burke.

"Yes," said Kit. "They must have a prisoner or two over whom they are having their fun, as they seldom laugh out that way under other circumstances."

Kit crept through the bushes, and Burke followed. In a few minutes they came in sight of a campfire near the "sweet water" spring. There were about a score of warriors there, and in their midst was a white man, a prisoner. He was evidently a hunter, for he wore the buckskin hunting-shirt and leggings, and had the appearance of a man of some five-and-forty years of age.

They had his hands securely tied behind him. He seemed to be undaunted by his condition, and bantered the red warriors for some time.

"A nice lot yer are," he said. "Yer're the stinkiest lot o' coppery skunks I ever did see. I wiped out four on ye in less'n two minutes. Yer kain't fight wurth a cent, yer kain't."

"Paleface heap big talk," said one of the warriors. "When you feel the fire at the stake, you'll cry like a papoose."

"Cry, thunder!" contemptuously replied the Yankee hunter, for such he evidently was. "Why, fire won't burn me, yer ornery skunks. The Shoshones tried that on an' kept up a red-hot fire for three days, an' then got tired of it. Yu kain't burn me, yer kain't."

One of the warriors reached down, and, taking a burning fagot from the fire, applied it to the seat of his pants where they were worn through.

The effect was magical.

The prisoner sprang about six feet in the air, amid a roar of laughter from the dusky warriors, and came down in a towering rage.

Quick as a flash he wheeled round and gave the offending warrior a kick on the neck, for he was sitting down near the fire.

The savage fell without a groan, and lay perfectly still.

The warriors kept up the roar of laughter several minutes. Then they ceased, and one of them turned to speak to the warrior who had applied the fagot. He got no answer. He got up and examined him, and grunted:

"Ugh! Warrior dead—neck broke!"

Then the laughter ceased.

They stared at their prisoner and then at the dead warrior.

"Why don't you laugh on?" the prisoner asked. "What do yer stop for, eh? Why don't some of yer gimme some more fire, eh?"

There was a howl for vengeance from the warriors. They clamored for his blood then and there.

"Ugh!" grunted the chief. "Paleface, burn now."

The warriors made a dash to seize and tie him to the nearest tree, where they intended to burn him. The tall, lanky hunter raised his right foot and kicked the foremost warrior in the stomach. The dusky son of the forest was instantly doubled up like a jack-knife. Two more suffered the same fate in almost as many seconds.

But such an unequal contest could have but one result. The prisoner was overpowered, borne to earth, and rendered utterly helpless.

Then, with savage yells, they bound him to the tree, and proceeded to gather fagots to pile around him.

The prisoner appeared unmoved by the near approach of a horrible death. He even smiled at and taunted the red villains with not knowing how to do their work like brave warriors.

"We must save him, Burke," whispered Kit Carson to the little scout by his side.

"Yes, at all hazards," replied Burke. "I am ready."

"Well, you stand here. I will go almost around to the other side and pick off one of them. When they are almost on the point of rushing forward toward me, you fire. That will stop them, and give me time to reload. Understand?"

"Yes—good idea. We know each other's signal, and can get together again."

Kit Carson slipped away in the dark and crept about two-thirds the way around the camp. He stopped in a convenient clump of bushes and watched the actions of the redskins.

When the pile of fagots was up about the waist of the prisoner, the chief of the band took a torch from the fire and approached to apply it to the pile.

Then was the supreme moment.

Young Burke Miller, in his impatience, wondered why Kit Carson delayed his shot.

Crack!

The sharp, clear report of Kit's unerring rifle awakened the echoes of the forest. The next moment the red chief sank down at the feet of his intended victim, gasping in the agonies of death.

The warriors uttered fierce yells, sprang to their feet and seized their arms. One of their number spoke a few words to his comrades, and then they started to charge the thicket whence came the shot.

Crack!

Burke Miller's shot completely changed the situation.

The dumfounded warriors halted, stared at each other, and then started toward the spot whence came this last shot.

Crack!

Kit's second shot overtook them just as they were repassing the prisoner and the pile of fagots, and a third warrior laid down and gave up the ghost.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the prisoner. "This is fun, redskins. How about yer fire?"

He intuitively knew that unknown friends were at hand.

They turned again, and again the little scout's shot arrested them and laid another low.

Then they became excited, and decided to leave the light of the campfire and break for cover. Two warriors drew their tomahawks and rushed at the prisoner to dispatch him. Fortunately both scouts had charges in their rifles.

Crack!

Crack!

Two warriors went down right at the prisoner's feet.

With howls of rage the whole band made a dash for the thicket. Then Kit, who was always quick to act, dashed in and released the prisoner. The hunter seized a rifle and dashed back into the woods with his deliverer.

CHAPTER VI.

A TERRIBLE NIGHT'S WORK.

The prisoner was an old experienced hunter and Indian fighter. He understood the situation as well as his rescuers did, and promptly followed Kit Carson to act in harmony with him.

"Come away, pard," said Kit, as soon as he found that the Indians had left the light to avoid being made targets of; "they are too many for us in the dark."

"That's a fac', pard," replied the Yankee; "we'd better git from hyer quick."

Kit signaled to Burke, Burke signaled back, and in a few moments the three were together.

"Come," said Kit, "let's go;" and he led the way back toward the spot where he and Burke had left their two horses. He knew the redskins could follow no trail in the dark. So all they had to do was to go straight ahead.

Pretty soon they reached the horses. But they didn't mount. They walked on till they were at least a mile distant from the place of rescue. Then they halted and sat down on a fallen tree.

"We are out of their reach now," remarked Kit. "They can't find our trail before morning. Who are you, pard?"

"Hank Mundy," was the reply of the hunter. "Who be yer, pard?"

"Kit Carson," replied the great scout.

"Gr-r-r-eat catamounts!" exclaimed the hunter, leaping to his feet and grasping Kit's hand; "I'm teetotally proper glad ter see yer, Kit, I am, by gosh! I've hearn tell on yer for many years, an' allers wanted for ter meet yer. Gosh almighty! ain't it funny how us meet, now?"

"Well, rather funny, I should say," returned Kit, "considering how you kicked those redskins about."

"It was all-fired funny, wasn't it? I wur tryin' ter make 'em kill me ter onct, 'case I knowed they was goin' ter roast me. Gosh darn it all, I'm tarnation glad to see yer, Kit, I am," and he wrung Carson's hand again with the force of a ten horse-power engine.

"I am glad to meet you, too," said Kit. "I've often heard of you. You had a scrimmage with the reds upon the Yellowstone once, did you not?"

"I did, an' I wur a hot one, too."

"Yes, everybody was talking about it. This is my young friend, Burke Miller, as good a scout as you or me, and brave as a lion."

Hank grasped Burke's hand and wrung it nearly off.

"Say," said Burke. "If you had shaken hands with the redskins they'd have let you alone!"

"Gosh darn it, younker, I killed every one I got my hands on, but they were too many for me."

Burke felt of his crushed hand and mentally concluded that Hank Mundy had not lied. He also made up his mind not to shake hands with him again under any circumstances.

"How did they get you, Mundy?" Kit asked, after a pause.

"I run in on 'em kinder blind like," he replied, "an' hed the durndest scrimmage yer ever heerd tell on. But they wur too many, durn 'em."

That was a short story, but it told volumes to the old scout who had witnessed such scenes in his career.

"Yes," said he; "when too many pile in on one he has to go under. I've been there myself."

"So have I more'n onct," put in Hank.

It was now very late in the night, and the three were in need of sleep.

"If we can wake up before daylight," suggested Kit, "we might go back and wipe out that band."

"Yes, by thunder!" exclaimed Hank; "'an thet's my leetle game, pards."

"Well, we are in that little game, too," remarked Burke.

"Then we'll lay down right here and take a short nap."

"Good!" assented Hank.

They stretched themselves out on the ground and were soon asleep, with no guard but the two horses browsing near them.

They slept about three or four hours, and then Hank Mundy awoke. He nudged the others with his elbow, and in an instant all three were on their feet.

"Time ter go," said Hank.

"Yes," said Kit. "Come on."

They made their way toward the Indian camp about a mile distant. The campfire had burned down to a bed of glowing coals that gave a red, somber glare to the foliage of the trees.

By the smoldering campfire they found two warriors sitting on the ground. They were the sentinels. The others were lying all around them fast asleep.

The fact that two Indians were on guard showed that they did not consider themselves exactly safe from a night attack. It was decided to creep up on the two sentinels and kill them with bowies, if possible. Burke let Hank Mundy have his knife and contented himself with a scalping-knife he had picked up.

Kit and Hank crept forward toward the two sentinels. Old woodmen as they were, they were unable to get up near enough to strike ere they were discovered. One of the guards uttered a piercing yell and sprang at Kit.

Of course he was cut down in a trice. But the other warriors sprang up and took part in the fight.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Rifles and pistols belched forth death, and then the terrible bowies did fearful execution. Still there were too many redskins for three men to contend against, and so Kit and his two comrades darted suddenly into the woods. Several redskins followed and never came back.

"We got away with seven of them, anyhow," said Burke, as they stood near the edge of the timber, looking out on the boundless prairie, "and that pays for the trouble."

"Of course it does. I'd do it every night in a week for that many."

"Thet's my hand, pard," said Hank. "Every tarnal redskin as gits wiped out is a hundred dollars saved ter this 'ere mighty Yankee nation o' ourn."

"I guess you're right," remarked Kit. "Do you know we are going to have trouble with the band as soon as those stars up there fade away. When our trail is visible they'll be after us."

"Thet's er fac', pard. I'm right proper glad on it, too, I am."

"We can take care of them, I guess," remarked Burke. "There isn't more than ten or a dozen of 'em left."

"Then we must stay in the thicket, or, what would be better, go back and kill as many more of them as we can before daylight gives them an equal chance with us."

"Thet's ther game, pard," assented Hank. "We can do thet mighty slick."

"Come on, then, and let's get to work before it gets too light."

They crept back toward the camp of the redskins.

The enemy huddled round the fire and consulted. They had lost one-half of their number and now they were growing desperate.

As they stood round the fire listening to an old warrior, three rifle-shots rang out on the still night air, and three warriors bit the dust. Then commenced a death struggle, such as is seldom seen on battlefields, and over which it is charity to draw the curtain of silence.

CHAPTER VII.

BESIEGED IN A CAVE.

The terrible struggle lasted but a few minutes. The Indians would not believe that such desperate, destruc-

tive attacks upon them had been made by only three palefaces. Such an idea was unreasonable. Under the impression, therefore, that there were more than their own number against them, they broke and fled like a flock of sheep.

Kit and Hank knew from the character of their yells that utter demoralization had seized them. They had no more to fear from them that night, or rather day, for the stars were now beginning to fade.

Burke and Hank received cuts in the last attack. Both bled freely, but the wounds were more painful than dangerous.

Kit bandaged them as well as he could, and then turned his attention to collecting a breakfast out of the stores of the redskins. He soon found parched corn and dried buffalo meat enough to satisfy their hunger, and then insisted on his two comrades lying down and getting more sleep.

"You need it," he said, "and I will keep watch over you."

They followed his advice and slept till near noon. Then he worked up another meal for them.

Neither Burke nor Hank felt as sore from their wounds as they had expected. Yet they were not in a condition to do much fighting in case of a sudden attack.

"You must have rest," said Kit, shaking his head. "You ain't fit for work just now. I know where there is a cave four miles above here, where we can rest a week or two, have plenty of good water, grass for our stock, and shelter for ourselves."

"By gum, I know the same place, pard!" exclaimed Hank. "I hid in ther a whole week onct."

"Then you know just what it is. We must go there and stay till your wounds heal up."

So it was agreed upon. Kit placed Hank on his horse and Burke upon his own. Then he led the way, carrying one dozen Indian rifles tied together in a bunch.

They reached the cave and found it unoccupied.

A spring of cold water was inside of it.

The entrance was so narrow that one man could defend it against a hundred.

Here they could be safe.

Should fever set in and lay the wounded on their backs, the old scout could protect them against a thousand enemies on the outside.

But they were not destined to be scorched by fever. Both men had good constitutions, and their temperaments were such as to assist nature.

Taking the saddles off the two horses and placing them in the cave, Kit turned the animals loose to graze, knowing that Whirlwind would always be within hearing of his call. The other would remain with him. Then he took his rifle and went out in search of a deer. In an hour's time he had shot two. Taking the hind quarters, he left the others to the wolves.

This meat he at once cured in the cave by hanging it up in the smoke of the fire.

The first night in the cave Kit spent as guard at the entrance. The wounded men could watch in the daytime while he slept.

Three days passed, and no sign of Indians had been seen. They were congratulating themselves on their good fortune, when they were startled by the sound of voices outside.

Looking out, Kit saw a party of Piutes trying to mount Whirlwind. They had caught him and the gray, and were trying to use them. The gray, having once belonged to the redskins, made no resistance. But not so with the fiery steed of the old scout. He seemed to have as much hatred of the red man as did his master, and utterly refused to allow one of the hated race to bestride him.

There were upwards of forty Indians in the band, and the

famous scout looked sorrowfully out from his hiding-place at his splendid animal.

"Poor Whirlwind," he muttered. "They have got you; but I will rescue you, if I have to follow you round the world."

Three or four savages held the spirited horse's head whilst a valiant warrior mounted him. The moment he was well fixed on the horse's back the warrior told them to let go, and they did.

Whirlwind reared and plunged, but in vain. The redskin was a good horseman. He held on like a squirrel to a limb in a windstorm.

Suddenly, and before the savage could prevent it, he sprang forward under a tree. One of the lower limbs raked the redskin off as quick as a flash. Ere he reached the ground Whirlwind gave him both heels and finished him. He didn't live ten minutes, to the intense amazement of the red rascals.

"Good for you, Whirlwind!" exclaimed Kit. "That was well done."

The excited savages tried to capture him again, but he kept out of their reach.

One of the redskins came round to the entrance of the cave, and Burke Miller at once recognized him as one of the Piute braves of the village where he had been kept so long. His name was Big Tree.

"Hello, Big Tree," cried Burke.

The savage recognized the voice as that of Little Hand, by which name Burke was known among them.

"Ugh!" he grunted. "Little Hand! How be? What matter?" and he advanced into the cave to see him better.

"Oh, I'm all right. This is my friend, Kit Carson."

Kit was by the redskin's side in a flash.

The sound of that terrible name struck Big Tree dumb.

He gazed at the dreaded scout as though he was an emissary from the dead, and was about to fly, when Hank Mundy drew his bowie across his throat so quickly as to cut off any cry.

"Cut his head off and throw it outside," said Kit.

It was quickly done.

The body was shoved aside and the result watched.

In a few minutes one of the warriors stumbled over the head.

He looked down and recognized the features as those of Big Tree, one of their best warriors.

His yell rang out with a startling fierceness, and instantly every warrior in the band took it up. The woods rang with the savage music.

Then the warriors gathered around the gory head and gazed at it. They looked at the cave, and half suspected the body to be in there.

One of their number entered.

He was permitted to go far in ere the scouts attacked him.

In another minute his head was hurled out of the cave and struck another warrior with such force on the breast as to knock him down.

The incident filled them with horror. They recoiled and fired a volley into the mouth of the cave.

Kit had expected such a movement, and kept out of range, as did the other two.

"Don't return the fire," said Kit, "nor make any noise. They will be puzzled, for they are very superstitious."

Having water in plenty, and meat enough to last them a fortnight, Kit was in nowise uneasy about a regular siege.

Just as Kit said, the redskins were greatly puzzled, and grew superstitious over the affair. Who they were in the cave was what troubled them. They knew well enough that, whoever they were, they were enemies. That was a plain enough fact to them.

They whooped and yelled like so many maniacs, and fired another volley into the cave. Still the scouts did not return the fire. They wanted to reserve that until the supreme moment, if such a moment was to come to them.

Suddenly Burke Miller grew terribly excited.

"By the God of my fathers!" he exclaimed, clutching Kit Carson's arms, "there's that renegade, Gross, out there!"

"Eh? What? Gross, did you say?"

"Yes—that big fellow out there with a patch of brown beard on his chin. That's him, though he is painted up like a Piute warrior."

Kit glared at the renegade for full five minutes, and then said:

"Yes, you are right. That's Gross. Do you see him, Mundy—that fellow with the chin beard?"

"Yes," replied Mundy.

"Well, be careful and don't hurt him. We want to take him alive, if it takes us five years to do it."

"All right—I won't tetch 'im," said Mundy.

Burke gazed at the renegade until his eyes blazed and his nostrils dilated. His whole frame quivered with suppressed rage, as he gazed upon the relentless murderer of his parents.

As the scouts did not return their fire, the Indians grew bolder by degrees, and came nearer to the entrance of the cave. The profound silence within greatly puzzled them. They knew not what to make of it.

But they dared not attempt to enter the cave. The stoutest-hearted of them shrunk from it, and thus stood affairs when the sun went down and left the timber under a pall of darkness.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REVELATION FROM THE CAVE.

"Now we have got to keep a good watch through the night," said Kit, in a whisper, to Hank and Burke, as he saw the redskins building a fire so the light would shine full on the mouth of the cave.

"Waal, we can do thet," said Hank, in an offhand way.

"Yes, I think we can," remarked Burke. "But I'd like mighty well to get out there and at them."

"So would I, pard," and Hank extended his hand toward Burke. The young scout didn't take the hand. He knew something about its grasp, and didn't care to shake it.

"Look! They're coming with torches!" whispered Burke, as he stood gazing out at the savages by the campfire.

Hank and Kit looked and saw four stalwart warriors advancing toward the mouth of the cave, each with a blazing bunch of fagots in his hand.

"I don't think they will dare to enter," quietly remarked Kit.

He was right.

They came up to within ten or fifteen feet of the cave, and then hurled their torches into it.

Their object was to get a light in there so they could see what was to be seen there. But the three whites kept out of range, and in a few minutes the torches died out and darkness once more reigned within.

"That was a very good trick," whispered Kit, "but it didn't work."

"No, not much, it didn't," said Hank. "What'll ther varmints do next, eh?"

"Wait and see."

"Two are coming with tomahawks," said Burke, "and one behind them with a torch."

"Let 'em come in," whispered Kit. "We can attend to them, can't we?"

"Yes, yes!" came from Hank and Burke.

They drew their knives and crouched back into the craggy niche of the rocky-walled cave and waited for the wily redmen to appear.

Slowly and cautiously the redskins advanced. They looked keenly to the right and left, and finally turned to go toward the spring.

Then it was that the three whites sprang out upon them like thunderbolts. The savages never saw them till their knives had severed their jugulars. Only one made a noise and that was not heard beyond the mouth of the cavern. Down they sank at the feet of their slayers, and in two or three minutes their spirits were on their way, through space, toward the happy hunting-ground of their theology.

Those outside saw that the light had been suddenly extinguished, and waited breathlessly to hear from them.

A half hour passed, and then a feeling of uneasiness began to take possession of their minds. Several of them came close to the entrance and leaned forward in listening attitudes.

Then it was that Kit knocked one of them down with the severed head of one of the slain warriors.

A yell that echoed far and wide through the forest followed.

The other two heads were thrown out, and their features were plainly recognized by the excited warriors.

Such wild dancing and yells as followed! They were roused to the wildest frenzy of desperation. One of their old warriors made a speech to them, and advocated the closing up of the mouth of the cave.

"No!" exclaimed Gross, the renegade. "Let's pile brush against it and set it on fire. We can roast and smoke 'em out. They are white men in there. That Yankee, Hank Mundy is one of them. This is his work."

"Didn't know the cuss knowed me!" whispered Hank, inside the cave.

"We must not let 'em put brush there," said Kit.

"What'll we do, then?" Burke asked.

"We'll have to shoot."

"All right."

"Let 'em come with one armful, and then, with our pistols and Hank's rifle, we can wipe out five of 'em."

They waited.

Seven of them approached the entrance with armsful of fagots.

Crack! went Hank's rifle.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

The four pistols belched forth almost instant death at short range, and then the three whites dodged back, out of range of the enemy's fire.

Five Indians lay weltering in their blood in front of the cavern.

Howls and savage imprecations burst from the other warriors. They poured a volley into the cave, but without doing any harm to anyone.

This sudden disaster had upset the redskins awfully. They were almost stunned by it. Five of their bravest warriors wiped out right before their eyes! Five more had lost their heads in the cave, and yet none of them had seen the terrible enemy within.

"We must smoke 'em out!" cried Gross again. "Drop the brush down from above the cave!"

The savages were still near the campfire in full view of the three scouts.

"Let's wipe out three more with our rifles!" suggested Burke Miller.

"Yes," assented Kit. "Now!"

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Three stalwart warriors fell forward—two of them into the fire—and there was a scattering of the others.

In another moment not another redskin was to be seen. They had placed themselves quickly out of harm's way.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Hank Mundy. "This is good!"

A long silence followed.

The savages were busy concocting a plan to dislodge the whites.

Suddenly Kit noticed a small shower of pebbles rolling down from above the mouth of the cave.

"Ah! They are there!" he muttered. "They are going to drop brush down from there till they fill up the entrance. Well, we'll see about that."

The fire now gave but a feeble light, so that the entrance to the cave was quite dark. Kit noticed that fact with great satisfaction.

By and by a great armful of fagots came rattling down in the mouth of the cave.

Kit very quietly picked it up and conveyed it to the inside. Burke and Hank saw his motive at once and aided him, wounded though they were.

There was a perfect rain of fagots for upwards of an hour; but, as fast as they came down the scouts removed them, so that none remained.

Hank chuckled all the time he was moving the fagots. He anticipated some fun when the redskins came round in front to set fire to them. They would find none there, of course, and then they would have something to yell about again.

After awhile they ceased throwing down fagots. They concluded they had enough for their purpose, and came down to set fire to them.

Some three or four threw armsful on the original fire in front of the cave. When it blazed up and showed them the entrance with not a single fagot before it, there was a general grunt of disgust, followed by a yell of rage.

The three whites enjoyed the situation hugely.

"Oh, ain't they mad, though?" said Hank Mundy.

"Mad all over," replied Kit. "Better speak to 'em, Burke, and let 'em know you are in here. Maybe that'll make 'em try to rush in, and give us a chance to pick off a few more of 'em."

"All right," said Burke. "I'll do it," and, going as near to the mouth of the cave as he dared to, he called out:

"Hello, Gross, you renegade!"

"The fiends!" gasped Gross, on hearing his name called. "Who are you?"

"Little Hand—Burke Miller!" was the reply.

"Ten thousand demons!" yelled the renegade. "It's Little Hand, warriors!"

"Ugh! Little Hand! No, no!" grunted the entire band.

It was incredible; they couldn't relieve it.

"Yes, it is," persisted Gross. "I know his voice. Little Hand! Little Hand!" he called.

"I am here," responded Burke.

"What does this mean?" demanded Gross.

"It means that I am after the blood of my father's murderers. I have sworn their death. They shall die the death of dogs!"

"Ugh! Little Hand big brave!" grunted an old warrior. "Boy no more. Ten Piute warriors dead. Ugh!"

CHAPTER IX.

SAVED BY A STORM.

The revelation startled the Piute warriors. They had never dreamed that the youth they had kept for seven years to make a warrior of, would one day turn against them and inflict such a terrible blow as had been given. It looked like retribution, only the savages could not understand that term. They have no conscience, hence cannot comprehend retribution. Remorse never troubles an Indian. There are a few white Indians whose skin ought to be tanned a copper color, on account of having similar characteristics.

The Piutes immediately proceeded to hold a council of war. But they got out of the way of the rifles in the cave before doing so.

The renegade denounced the young scout in the severest terms, and declared his intention of destroying him in the same way he had destroyed the rest of his people.

The Piutes hailed him with grunts of satisfaction.

"May be we can get him to come out and surrender," he said. "We'll even promise to make him one of the big chiefs of the tribe."

"Ugh!" grunted the Piutes, in admiration of such palefaced duplicity.

"Let Red Hawk go and talk to him and tell him this," suggested Gross.

"Ugh!" grunted Red Hawk, "me go—me great brave—no 'fraid of Little Hand."

He went round to a point where he could be heard but not seen. The wily old rascal had a wholesome fear of the young white.

"Little Hand!" he called, "Red Hawk speaks. If his ears are open he will hear Red Hawk's words."

"I am listening, Red Hawk," said Burke. "Talk as much as you please."

"Little Hand is a great brave. Red Hawk thought he was only a boy. Ten Piute warriors have fallen before him. If Little Hand will come forth the Piutes will make him their great chief, and he——"

"You are a great liar, Red Hawk. Your tongue is crooked; your heart is crooked. I am white—not red. I love my people, and am going to avenge the death of my father, mother and brothers. I have sworn it by the God of my people. Let Red Hawk beware. I am no longer a boy; I am a man! A thousand Piutes shall fall by my hands!"

"Ugh!" grunted Red Hawk. "Little Hand heap big talk, Red Hawk find him some day an' take him scalp!"

Burke drew his pistol and ran out of the cave to the rock behind which Red Hawk was crouching. Dashing around the rock, he gave the old savage a shot in the side, and then flew back into the cave before the old rascal got a glimpse of him.

Red Hawk uttered a death-whoop, and staggered away toward his warriors. They heard the shot, saw the flash, and listened to the death-yell of the old warrior as he reeled toward them.

He came reeling like a drunken man, and two of the warriors received him in their arms and laid him on the grass.

His death-song was heard down in the cave by the three brave whites. But they had no sympathy for him.

"Hush-sh!" cautioned Hank. "Someone is speaking."

A warrior was counseling a regular siege of the cave. He said, while there was plenty of water in the cave, Little Hand could have but little to eat. If they would guard the cave for a week they would find him too weak to resist them.

Grunts of approbation greeted the speech, and then a prolonged silence followed.

"We can get out without being seen," whispered Kit Carson, "if we wait till the guards become drowsy and off their usual alertness."

"Yes," added Hank, "thar ain't no trouble about thet. Injuns ain't no account for sentinels, they ain't."

They waited three hours, and then had the satisfaction of hearing the rolling of distant thunder.

"A storm is coming up," said Kit. "That will help us out."

"Yes," said Burke. "The clouds are coming up heavy and dark, and the thunder comes nearer every minute. If we go out we will get a good drenching."

"That will do us good," said Kit. "I am anxious to get Whirlwind back again, and would face a thousand storms to save him."

"A good horse is worth a heap in these times," remarked Hank Mundy.

A half hour passed, and then the storm burst upon the timber. It roared and shrieked through the forest equal to the din of a battlefield.

"Now is our time," said Kit. "Take your saddle, Burke, and follow me."

They picked up their saddles and started out. The roar of the elements rendered it unnecessary for them to creep or step softly. They marched boldly, and stepped quickly, and in a few minutes were in the woods beyond the cave.

A single flash of lightning at a certain time would have revealed their presence and precipitated an attack by the savages.

But the flash did not come until they had gained the protection of the woods, and then it only benefited the fugitives. It enabled them to shape their course and make better headway. Of course they were drenched to the skin, but what cared they for that? They took the rain and sunshine as they came, and made no complaint of hard luck.

When about a half mile away from the cave, Kit Carson blew a shrill whistle on his fingers, a signal to Whirlwind.

"We must wait here," he said, "till I know whether or not he hears me. If he does he will get to me, or break his neck trying."

Ten minutes passed, and then he blew another signal.

"Won't the redskins hear and come?" Burke asked.

"No. Nothing can move them on such a night as this."

Ten minutes passed again, and again Kit blew a louder and shriller blast on his fingers.

"Ah! I heard him!" exclaimed Burke. "I heard him answer you! Lord, what a horse he is!"

Sure enough, they heard him neigh away out in the timber, and then Kit whistled again to guide him correctly. Another ten minutes passed, and then the noble animal came up and rubbed his head against his master. Three other horses had followed him, Burke's gray among them.

"By George!" exclaimed Burke, "he has brought a horse for you, Mundy!"

"Much obliged to him," said Mundy, "but I ain't got no saddle an' bridle."

"That makes no difference," said Kit; "none of us can ride in this timber. We must go round to the head of the timber, to the old cabin under the hill. This rain will destroy our trail—come."

CHAPTER X.

A BRAVE RESCUE.

Dark as it was, Kit Carson knew exactly where he was, for he had been through the timber several times before. He

knew just where he was when he struck the prairie. The vivid flashes of lightning aided him just enough for his purpose.

But Hank Mundy was of the opinion that they were in danger of missing their objective point.

"Do yer know yer grip, pard?" he asked of Kit.

"I do," was the sententious reply.

"Good! Hold on to her. I'm with yer."

"Kit Carson never loses his grip," remarked Burke Miller to the Yankee.

"That's so, pard, I reckon," admitted Hank.

They marched on up the edge of the timber, their horses following close behind them. The rain came down in torrents, drenching them to the skin. But they minded it not. They were used to such experience out on the plains.

Some three or four miles were passed, and then Kit halted and looked around him. It was so dark he could scarcely see his hand before his face.

"Wait till the lightning flashes again," he said, "and then we can see exactly where we are."

Some three or four minutes later a flash came, and Kit took in the situation.

"We have about a quarter of a mile to go yet," he said.

"Come on. I know just where we are."

They followed him with a blind faith. They knew him, and never doubted him.

Just about the fourth of a mile farther on they found themselves under several large trees. A flash of lightning showed them a thick forest growth on their left.

"Come on," said Kit again. "The hut is just back here in the woods."

They pushed on through the woods about one hundred yards, when Kit suddenly halted.

"Hold on," he said. "There's somebody in the hut."

Just in front of them were several horizontal streaks of light, showing that they came from between the logs of a hut. The three men stopped in the pouring rain and gazed at the streaks as if they were rays of light from the gates of Paradise.

"Wait here till I see who is there," said Kit.

He advanced and peered through the crevices.

Only four Indians—no! He saw a young white girl sitting near the fire, weeping as if her heart would break.

She seemed about eighteen or twenty years of age.

The redskins had captured her somewhere, and had reached the timber when the storm came up. The hut afforded them shelter, and they availed themselves of it.

"Only four," muttered Kit to himself. "I could wipe them out myself. But I will tell Burke and Mundy, and they will take a hand in rescuing her, too."

He went back to his two companions, and reported what he had seen in the hut.

"Great gosh!" exclaimed Hank.

"Let's kill 'em at once," suggested Burke, full of honest indignation.

"We'll have to kill 'em, of course," said Kit. "But if we knock on the door they will be on their guard, and might shoot one of us."

"If they are Piutes," said Burke, "I can make 'em open the door without any trouble. I know the Piute tongue all the way through."

"They are Piutes," quietly remarked Kit. "Go and look at them. You may know who they are."

Burke walked boldly up to the door of the hut and struck it with the butt of his rifle.

The four Piutes inside instantly sprang to their feet.

"Who are you?" demanded old Black Dog, the Piute chief.

"Little Hand!" replied Burke, in the Piute tongue.

"Ugh!" grunted the others, turning carelessly toward the e. "Little Hand all over wet like prairie grass."

Black Dog opened the door and the three sprang inside. Hank cut the old rascal down with his bowie, and then the st were evenly matched.

Two others were cut down just as they were about to draw their tomahawks, and only one remained. He was facing Burke.

"Ugh! Little Hand is a traitor," he said, glaring at the youth who covered him with his pistol.

"Am I a Piute?" Burke asked, indignantly. "How am I traitor? I am on the warpath after the murderers of my people. You were with Gross when my parents were captured. I was a child then. I am a child no longer. I have killed Red Hawk to-night, and now your time has come!"

Burke lowered his pistol and drew his bowie. The wily savage seized the opportunity to spring upon him, but Burke was watching him. He was too late. Burke plunged his bowie to the hilt in his breast, and he sank down on the floor in the quivering agonies of death.

"Oh, I am free!" cried the young girl, clasping her hands in a spasm of joy. "You are white men! You will save me!"

"Yes, my dear young lady," said Kit Carson. "You are free now, for we would lay down our lives, if necessary, to save you."

"Oh, heaven bless you!" exclaimed the young girl, and then, girl like, burst into a flood of tears.

"Yes," put in Hank. "They don't git yer no more, young lady. Kit Carson is hyer, an' he——"

"Kit Carson! Oh, are you Kit Carson!" almost shrieked the girl, bounding toward Hank Mundy.

"No, ma'am. Thet's him thar," and he pointed toward the mousey scout.

The girl sprang forward and threw her arms around Kit Carson's neck.

"Oh, Mr. Carson," she cried. "You saved my father once, and now I owe you my life!"

"I saved your father, miss!" exclaimed Kit, not a little astonished. "Who is your father?"

"Joe Milligan is my father, and I——"

"Joe Milligan! My old friend! Are you little Bessie?"

"Yes—my father wanted to move back again," said Bessie, and we all started. Last night I wandered just a little way from the camp and the Indians seized and carried me away. Oh, how glad I am that you came here."

Kit then introduced Hank and Burke to Bessie. He gave her a short history of young Miller's life among the Piutes and the horrible fate of his parents. She gave her hand to him, saying:

"I sympathize ever so much with you. It's a terrible thing to lose father, mother and brothers at one blow."

"Yes, terrible indeed," he said, in low, sad tones "but," and his eyes flashed fire as he spoke, "my vengeance will be as terrible."

CHAPTER XI.

BESSIE MILLIGAN.

Whilst Kit Carson and Bessie Milligan were talking, Hank Mundy and Burke Miller removed the four dead Indians from the hut, carrying them about one hundred yards out into the woods, where they dumped them in a pile.

"The wolves can have a feast now," remarked Hank, as the last one was thrown down.

"Yes," replied Burke. "I am only sorry there are not more of them to eat."

"Thet's me, pard. I hate 'em like pizin, I do."

"So do I, and I'll be the worst case of poison to them that ever was."

"Thet's me, too. I'm all pizen to 'em. Say, thet 'ere's a nice gal, eh?"

"Yes, she seems to be. Her father is an old friend of Mr. Carson."

"So he is," and by that time they had again returned to the hut.

Kit had rebuilt the fire, and now the blaze lighted up the old hut into something like cheerfulness. All three of them stood before the fire, turning about until their clothes were perfectly dry.

Then, as the storm continued, Hank Mundy offered to stand guard while the others slept.

"No use of that," said Kit, "for no Indian in the world would stir out on such a night as this. We can all take a nap if we want to."

They accordingly laid themselves down on the bare floor in front of the fire, and were soon asleep.

Hank Mundy was the first to wake up. He opened the door, and found the stars just fading away in a cloudless sky. Day was dawning.

Calling up Kit and Burke, he told them of the cessation of the storm, and the probability that Indians would soon be about.

"I'll go out and kill something for breakfast," said Kit, "whilst you and Burke build up the fire and keep a lookout for redskins."

Shouldering his rifle, the old scout stalked out of the hut and took to the woods.

In less than ten minutes his keen whip-like rifle-shot was heard. They knew that he had either found game or an enemy.

He appeared with a large, fat turkey, which Hank Mundy, though still sore from his wound, proceeded to divest of its feathers.

While the breakfast was cooking Kit Carson was out in the woods near the hut guarding against the approach of redskins. He waited there till Hank came out to relieve him after eating breakfast, when he went in to eat his share.

"Now, Bessie," he said to the young girl, after finishing the turkey, "we must get back to your father, for they will all be very much troubled about you."

"Oh, I know mother is almost crazy," said Bessie, her eyes filling with tears.

"Well, we'll start right away. Do you know just where your party was when you were captured?"

"Yes. We were camping on Wolf Creek."

"Ah! I know the very spot, then! Burke, you must let her have your horse. I will bring him back with me."

"Of course—I would give my life for her if needed," and his earnest words caused Bessie to suddenly turn and look him in the face. His eyes met hers, and a blush suffused her sun-browned cheeks.

"I thank you ever so much," she murmured.

He made no reply, but turned away, took up his saddle, which had thoroughly dried before the fire, and went out in search of his horse.

"Bessie," said Kit, "he is the bravest man I ever knew."

"I knew that from what I saw him do last night," she replied. "I am so sorry for him. He looks so sad and sorrowful."

"All his people have been murdered by the Piutes, and I suppose he will die warring against that tribe."

"I can't blame him for that, though it's perfectly awful."

The two horses were soon ready. Kit told Burke and Hank to remain in the timber, somewhere in the neighborhood of

the hut, till he returned. They promised to wait there for him, and then shook hands with Bessie.

Kit then mounted, and then both rode away out on the prairie, leaving Burke and Hank in possession of the little log hut.

"We can now lie down and rest as long as we please," said Burke to the Yankee.

"As long as them red-skinned skunks 'll let us, yer mean," remarked Hank.

"They won't bother us here to-day; at any rate."

"Dunno. Yer can't bet on Injuns an' win much, young pard."

"They are too busy watching that cave, I guess, thinking we are still in there, to ever think of coming up here."

"But them ain't all the redskins in the world, pard. Another band might come along hyer, an' scalp us ef we laid down to sleep ter onct."

"You may be right. You lay down, and I'll keep watch till noon."

"No—not much you won't. It's my time to watch, pard, so lay down, say yer prayers, an' sleep like a baby."

Burke went over in a corner of the hut and laid down on the bare floor. He was very much exhausted, and soon dropped into a sound sleep, from which he did not awake until late in the afternoon.

He was astonished at the length of his nap.

"Why did you let me sleep so long?" he asked of Hank.

"You needed it, pard," said the Yankee.

"But it isn't fair to—"

"Jes' so, pard; it's my fault, but I ain't going ter make no fuss about it."

When night came on Burke insisted on standing guard, saying he felt but little inconvenience from his wound, and would rather do guard duty than not.

Hank Mundy finally consented, and laid down to get the sleep he so much needed.

How long he slept he knew not, but when he awoke he found himself in the grasp of half a dozen Indian warriors.

CHAPTER XII.

HANK A CAPTIVE.

Let us now go back to the cave which our heroes vacated during a thunder-storm.

The Piutes, vigilant as they were, did not know the whites had slipped away from them. They were not to blame for that. Such darkness as prevailed at the time no human eye could pierce.

When the blinding flash of lightning came the scouts were safely screened under the forest trees.

Thinking their game still hemmed up in the cave, the Piutes kept faithful guard around it till the rising sun relieved them.

Drenched to the skin, the Indians presented quite a forlorn appearance. But they were so enraged at their terrible losses that they had sworn to have Little Hand if they had to dig him out.

As the sun rose higher in the heaven they began to make observations of the entrance to the cave. They saw that as fast as they threw the fagots down there the night before, those in there quickly removed them within under the cover of darkness.

Gross then took charge of the siege, and stationed a half dozen sharpshooters in a position whence they could draw beads on anyone who showed himself in the mouth of the cave.

Then he ordered them to gather fagots again, and throw them down from the top, as they had done the night before.

Burning with a desire to wreak vengeance on the young paleface who had slain Red Hawk, the Piutes hastened to the business of the renegade. They scoured the woods around for a quarter of a mile in search of fagots. Armful after armful was brought and cast down before the entrance of the cave. But each savage took particular pains to keep out of range of the rifles they supposed were still in there. The pile steadily grew until the entire entrance was filled. Then they uttered wild whoops of triumph and danced, like so many Indians, for joy.

Gross was delighted.

Taking a torch from the fire which they had kept burning under some fallen trees, he ran down to the pile of fagots and kindled a fire under it.

Being wet, they burned very slowly—tantalizingly so. If there is one virtue in the savage, it is that of patience. He always has the patience to wait for his turn at some kind of deviltry. So in this instance he sat and watched the fagots burn, however slow, and saw the smoke ascend with as much satisfaction as a hungry man inhales the delightful odors of his dinner while cooking.

The day waned, and the wet fagots still burned. They could see that the cave was completely filled with smoke. That within were suffocated they had not the shadow of a doubt.

At last the fire burned down, and the dusky fiends were eagerness to enter and explore the cave. But it was yet too full of the smoke to permit them to do so. Two hours later, with flaming torches, they entered and proceeded to search the cave.

The first thing that met their gaze was the spectacle of five headless bodies of the Piutes that had entered when the cave was occupied. That sight only enraged them the more. The next things they found were the venison hams Kit had brought in before the enemy besieged him.

Those they quickly seized and devoured. But the search went on. Every nook and corner was searched, but nothing of the mysterious defenders was found.

Grunts of disgust were heard on all sides, and Gross began to swear again. He ordered a second search, with a like result.

"Piutes," he exclaimed, "they slipped out like cowed coyotes last night, when the storm was raging."

A howl of rage went up from the fiends. They ran about the deserted cave and looked here and there, yelling and screeching like a lot of wild maniacs.

Bamboozled, outwitted, the whole band held a general council and decided to give up. The rain had obliterated the trail of the palefaces, and now they knew not which way to go in pursuit of them.

"We must divide," cried Gross to the warriors, when they came outside of the cave, "and go in search of them. One party must go south, and the other north. We can meet on the other side and tell what we have done. If you find Little Hand, take him alive to roast at the stake."

With wild yells the Piutes separated into two bands, and started off in hot pursuit. Gross went with the party northward, and Gray Wolf took charge of the band going south.

It was nearly dark when they started. They didn't expect to find any trail. They hoped to catch a glimpse of a campfire somewhere, and then come upon them unawares. It was easier to find a campfire at night than a trail in daylight, and the Piutes knew that fact perfectly well.

The party that went north, led by Gross, naturally went their way towards the cabin in which Burke, Miller and Hank Mundy had taken up their quarters.

Burke was on guard, and at regular intervals he went a-

crowled through the woods for over two hundred yards around the hut, to make sure that no enemy lurked about.

Just as he left the cabin for the third time, and when he was back in the woods, Gross and his band of savages came up and saw the light within. Peering through the crevices, they saw Hank Mundy lying asleep in a corner, and the door unfastened. They walked in and seized him.

"Hello!" exclaimed Hank, as he found himself in their grip, with no chance of escape.

"Ugh! Paleface sleep like heap big fool!" remarked one of the redskins.

"That's a fac', redskin," said Hank, looking around in search of Burke.

"Who are you?" Gross asked.

Mundy looked hard at him and answered:

"A white man. What are you?"

"Never mind what I am," was the curt reply. "What are you doing here?"

"I was sleeping, I reckon."

"Were you all alone?" Gross asked again.

"Guess I was. Leastwise I didn't see anyone else around when I was asleep," was the evasive reply.

They were not sure of anyone else being about, and so they prepared to resume their march around the timber. Just then Burke came forward, and, hearing voices in the hut, proceeded to examine the situation.

To his surprise he found the hut full of Indians and Hank prisoner in their midst. Of course he jumped quickly back into the bushes and contented himself in watching the proceedings. He recognized his bitterest foe, Gross, in the hut, and could have shot him down and escaped under cover of darkness. But he did not desire to kill him that way. He had presentiment that he would yet get him in his power and wreak a terrible vengeance on him.

He waited patiently in the woods till the redskins left with their prisoner, and then he resolved to follow and do his utmost to rescue the Yankee.

But before doing so he passed the door of the hut and looked in. A fierce yell behind him forced him to spring inside and close the heavy door. A moment later the yells of a score of savages outside told him that he was entrapped and that escape was impossible.

CHAPTER XIII.

BURKE MILLER'S WONDERFUL DISCOVERY.

Burke had been completely surprised. He had no intention of entering the hut, or allowing himself to be seen by any of the redskins. In fact, he desired, above all things, to keep his presence thereabouts a profound secret from them. He knew he could then have a far better chance to work for the rescue of the Yankee if he was not suspected of so doing.

But now here he was, completely hemmed in—cornered, as it were—with no avenue of escape that he could see.

"This is awful!" he exclaimed to himself, in an undertone. "There's no telling how many are out there. Hang it, I ought to be shot for a fool! That demon of a renegade will have me in his power to punish and torture to his heart's content. But he shan't have that pleasure. I won't be taken alive!" and then, as if in a fit of desperation, he ran to the fireplace and stamped out every spark of the fire there.

"They can't see my movements now," he muttered, and I will have a chance to pick off some of them before they can break in the door.

The light out, Burke got down on his hands and knees and

crawled across the floor, to prevent being seen or heard by them.

As he crawled he felt one of the heavy planks of the floor give under him in a peculiar way. The planks had been hewn, not sawed, and the movement at once attracted his attention.

He inserted his fingers in the crevice and pulled at the plank. He found it could be moved, and at once resolved to explore the place underneath, as he suspected the plank was left unpegged for a purpose.

It was the work of but a minute or two for him to displace the plank and get under the floor. He found a space of about three feet between the floor and the ground.

Crawling half towards the foundation of the chimney, he came across a large flat rock.

"Hello!" he mentally exclaimed, as he felt the dimensions of the rock. "This means something," and he commenced to pull at the rock.

At first he could not move it. He tried again with all his might.

It moved a few inches.

He could then get his fingers under it. That gave him a better show, and again he pried at it.

It moved again.

"Ah! There's a hole here!" he mentally exclaimed.

He dared not even whisper to himself lest the red fiends outside should hear him.

But he put all his strength to it, and moved the stone aside, revealing a hole large enough for an ordinary-sized man to go through.

He went down feet foremost, and found a rude flight of steps under him. Of course he followed the steps, still clinging to his rifle. The air of the place was close, but he had been in worse places, and he made up his mind that this was made as a refuge in times of danger by someone who had once occupied the cottage.

The howls of the redskins, as they pounded furiously on the door of the hut without, now reached his ears.

"Howl away!" he muttered to himself; "I won't open, but will close another door."

He tugged at the stairs and went up through the hole again, where he turned the rude plank down in its place. Then he went back into the hole, and drew the heavy rock over it so as to render it solid in its old place.

"Ah! I am safe now!" he said. "I can't even hear their yells. They can't find me here. It will puzzle them beyond anything they ever met with to know what became of me. How I wish I had a light, that I might explore this place and see just what it is."

He stalked about in the intense darkness till he struck his knee against a rude bench. In feeling of it he found it some four feet long by one wide.

"Somebody has occupied this place a long time ago," he said, "and I wish I had a light so I could see something of it. I am sure of one thing, that those red devils can't get at me here. I could defend the entrance against a hundred of them. I wonder if there's any provisions in this place, in case of a siege like this?"

He sat down on the bench and gave way to a train of thought. His whole past life as far back as he could remember passed before him. He remembered the last glimpse he had of his parents as he was led away by the Indians—leaving them bound to a tree. Then his life among the Piutes rendered his thoughts bitter in the extreme. How terrible it had been to him! Amid all these sad reflections the sweet face of Bessie Milligan crept in and out, with smiles and tender glances that at times made him forget the more bitter experience of the past.

In his train of thought he had laid himself down at full length on the rude bench, and soon he was soundly sleeping.

Hour after hour passed, and still he slept. He dreamed of his early boyhood before his young life had been blighted by the terrible calamity that had shadowed it. How long he slept he knew not; but, moving in his sleep, he fell from the bench to the ground. The sudden waking made him believe that he had been attacked, and in a flash he was on his feet again, striking right and left in the dark with his bowie.

But a minute or so of profound silence convinced him that he was alone.

He drew a long breath of relief.

He then commenced feeling around the place, in hope of finding something that would amuse or serve to pass the time away. After going halfway around the place, he suddenly struck his foot against something that caused him to stoop and examine it with his hands.

"My God!" he exclaimed, suddenly rising erect again, "it's a human skeleton!"

He stood there several minutes in that intense darkness, like one in a dream, imagining all the dismal, horrible things his active brain could conceive of.

"It's a dead man," he muttered, after a silence of several minutes, "and can do me no harm. But what does it mean? How came it here? He must have died here, and the secret of this retreat died with him. Oh, if I only had a light! If I could get two pieces of wood I could rub them till I got a light. Ah! I know what I will do. I will burn some wet powder on the end of the bench and look around. That will give me a slight glimpse of the place."

He commenced feeling around again for the bench, but failed to find it immediately. The failure was much to his advantage, however, for he came in contact with some dry grass and several flints.

Taking a handful of the grass and laying it on the table, or, rather, the bench, he commenced striking the flints together. The sparks dropped down into the dry grass and blazed up immediately.

The first thing that caught his eye as he glanced around the place was a rude stone dish of bears' grease, with a lot of wick curled in it.

"Ah! That's the lamp that was used to light this place."

He seized a handful of the burning straw and held it to the wick. It caught the blaze, and in a moment the place was well lighted.

"Thank heaven the darkness is gone!" he exclaimed, greatly relieved, dropping down on the bench as if to rest himself.

He glanced around the subterranean abode, and was amazed at what he saw.

Stretched at full length on the ground floor lay a human skeleton. The bones were picked clean and white by the ants, and the clothes the man once wore were but dust alongside. Resting on the pegs driven into the earth wall was a long rifle, rusty and useless; also a brace of old flint-lock pistols, a hunting-knife and powder-horn.

CHAPTER XIV.

BURNED TO THE GROUND.

Burke looked into everything he saw in the hope of finding something that would throw some light on the mysterious man who had occupied the place before him. But while he found a quantity of gold and silver coin, both of Spanish and Mexican coinage, he failed to find any writing that could enlighten him.

He counted the gold and silver coin, and found several hundred dollars—nearly a thousand in all.

"Who is the heir to this?" he asked aloud, looking at the place. "It falls to me in the absence of anyone else to claim it. I wonder if there is any more concealed about the place. I will search further and see what I can find."

He spent an hour or two looking around. He found a number of things that had evidently been stored away by the owner, but of which he could find but little use for.

Suddenly he found himself very hungry.

"I must have been in here a long time to be so hungry," he said. "There's nothing to eat in here."

He was very hungry indeed. The search of the place revealed nothing whatever that he could eat.

"I'll raise that stone just a little bit," he said, "and lift it up. The Indians may have gone away by this time. There's no harm in looking to see, anyway."

He started to ascend the stairs, or rude steps dug in the earth, to the stone. As he did so, he thought he felt an unusual heat above his head. Reaching up he touched the stone with his hand. He jerked it away as though dodging the paw of a wolf.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed, "I understand it all now. That renegade set the cabin on fire, and thinks he has burned me to a cinder! That accounts for the stone being so hot. I've got to wait here till it cools before I can get out. It won't burn always. I'll get out after awhile. But who would have thought it? Gross will be astonished when he sees me again, and I'll give him a scare that he will never get over. How I wish I could disguise myself so he would not know I was here till I wanted him to."

He sat there on the bench and waited. How long the hours seemed. They passed slowly, and the gnawings of hunger told him that time was passing. But he was used to hunger, cold and fatigue, and waited patiently for the stone to cool so he could raise it and pass out into the world again.

"I may as well go to sleep again," he said to himself, "for I feel a feeling of drowsiness creeping over me again. Time will hang less heavily on my hands, and I won't mind the pangs of hunger so much. The stone may be cold by the time I wake up."

He adjusted his coonskin cap under his head and laid down on the bench and soon fell asleep.

How long he slept he knew not. He awoke, however, feeling hungry enough to eat a wolf without bread or sauce.

He ran up the steps and placed his hand against the stone.

"Oh, it's only just a little warm," he said, "and that shows the fire has about died out. I'll raise it, anyhow, and see what comes of it."

He got up close under the stone and placed his right shoulder against it. In that position he had a good use of his strength. Pushing upward, he raised one end of the stone, and the next instant he was blinded by a shower of ashes that fell in on him. He couldn't see a wink. He was forced to drop the stone back into its place and put both hands to his eyes.

"I am blinded!" he groaned, rubbing his eyes, "and there's no water down here."

He staggered to the bench and sat down. Tears came into his eyes in sufficient quantity to wash out the ashes, and a few minutes he was able to see again.

"Fool that I am," he said, "I ought to have known there was a bank of ashes up there. I might have been blinded by the fire, and never been able to get out of this place."

He rubbed the ashes off as well as he could, and then essayed to raise the stone again. This time he closed his eyes tightly, and raised the stone high enough to let the entrance

bank of ashes that lay piled about it to fall in a heap around his feet.

The cloud of dust that arose almost strangled him, but he stood it bravely, and in a couple of minutes more ventured to open his eyes and look around him.

He found himself in the midst of a heap of ashes. Nothing but ashes remained of the hut.

"Ah! it was a narrow escape," he said. "That renegade thinks he has destroyed me, and has gone away satisfied. I wonder what has become of Hank Mundy? They may have burnt him in the hut. They are capable of doing anything as bad as that. It's now late in the afternoon. It must be the second day, judging from the way I feel. I was never so hungry in all my life. I'll get my rifle and get out. I must have something to eat. I can't stand it any longer."

He drew back, after pushing the stone aside, got his rifle, crawled up through the hole, and then placed the stone back over it. Then he kicked ashes about to conceal evidence of it having been moved.

"Now for something to eat," he muttered, looking around in every direction in search of game.

Seeing nothing about, he struck out into the woods, and soon found a turkey hen leading the flock about in quest of food. The young were almost half-grown, large enough for one of them to afford him a bountiful repast. He shot one of them, and the others took wing and flew away.

The report of his gun echoed through the woods, and he thought, for a moment or two, that he had done wrong in shooting. But he soon thought no more of it, and went to work building a fire to cook the young turkey.

It was the most delicious meal he ever ate. Possibly it seemed so because he was so hungry. A good appetite will see a royal banquet in the homeliest fare, so Burke Miller, when his turkey was but half broiled on the coals, thought it the sweetest morsel that ever passed his lips.

The meal finished, Burke returned to the site of the old hut and looked around him.

"Kit Carson must have returned yesterday," he said to himself, "and if he did he is following up the Piutes in search of Hank and me. I'll leave my money where I found it and go in search of him."

CHAPTER XV.

BURKE TRAILS A PONY AND CATCHES AN APACHE BEAUTY.

Shouldering his rifle, Burke started off through the timber in search of the trail of the Piutes, hoping either to run across them or Kit Carson. He was satisfied that the great scout, if he suspected that he was alive, would leave no stone unturned to find him.

"He wouldn't go back on any honest white man," said Burke, as he trudged along through the woods. "If he has come back and found the cabin in ashes he will think we are captured, and will follow up the Piutes to rescue us. That's just what he would do, and I am going to follow them right to their homes again, even if I lose my scalp for it."

Having fully made up his mind, he pushed southward along the skirts of the timber. He knew that if they had left the timber they would be likely to leave on that side. The trail of such a body of Indians could not be concealed in the grass, and no attempt would be made to hide it.

Mile after mile was passed, and at last he struck a trail. It was the trail of a band of mounted Indians. He knew they were Indians because Indians never have their ponies shod, as the whites do.

"Hank Mundy is with that band," muttered Burke, where stood in the edge of the timber and gazed out over the expanse of prairie. "But how am I going to follow on foot—the prairie," I could dodge about in the timber and get aways from half a hundred, but on the prairie a half dozen could ride me down and make short work of me. I'll go back by the cave again and see if some of their horses are not still in the woods. We killed about a dozen braves, and each of them had a pony. Some of them may have escaped in the storm that night, and if so they are wandering about eating grass and resting. If so, I can catch one and manage to use him."

He started once more into the depth of the timber, and made his way toward the cave where he had been hemmed in by the Piutes.

It was nearly sunset when he reached the spot. Everything was quiet. The Indians had buried their dead in their own peculiar way, and therefore no inconvenience remained on account of dead bodies.

He found nothing in the cave, and so did not long remain there. Horses were what he was in search of, and so he again took to the woods.

But he was destined to a disappointment that evening, for, whilst he struck the trail of a horse that was evidently wandering about at will, it soon grew too dark for him to follow it. That he might be able to follow it up at daylight, he laid down and slept on the trail.

That was a wise thing on his part, for when he awoke at daylight, he was enabled to pursue the trail. Killing a rabbit and stopping to cook and eat it occupied two hours of time. He had to eat, of course, to keep up his strength, for he didn't know at what time he would be required to put forth all his strength in a death struggle with one of the hated Piutes.

Resuming the trail, he followed it for miles, as the pony had wandered about in a zigzag sort of way, cropping grass here and there.

Suddenly he heard voices, and quickly concealed himself in a clump of bushes.

Scarcely had he hidden himself than two Apache warriors came along, leading a young Indian maiden, whose hands were tied together. She was evidently a prisoner, for she looked sad and weary. Her eyes showed that she had been weeping. She was a beautiful girl, as Indian beauty goes, and did not appear to be over sixteen or seventeen years old.

"She must be an Apache, too," said Burke to himself, as he gazed after them, "for she doesn't look much like a Piute, though she may be. I wonder what they are going to do with her? I'll pop over those two bucks, and find out all about them."

He quickly followed them up, and sent a bullet through the brain of one. The other sprang behind a tree and stood on the defensive.

Burke was concealed in a clump of bushes, where the Apache couldn't exactly locate him. Burke saw his advantage, and quickly reloaded his rifle. The Apache peered round from behind the tree, trying to locate his enemy.

Crack!

Burke sent a bullet through his head, and then stepped out of the bushes and approached the Indian girl. She had been utterly indifferent up to that moment. But the moment her eyes rested on the youthful figure of the young scout her whole face lit up with interest. She looked beyond him, expecting to see others come forth from the thicket.

"Young paleface great brave," she remarked, on seeing that he was alone. "Where other palefaces?"

"There are no others," he said. "I am alone. Who were those warriors?"

"Apache warriors. Big chiefs," she replied.

"What were they doing here?"

"They come to take Mauna away. Steal her in the dark."
 "Who is Mauna?"
 "Me Mauna—great chief, Red Wolf, my father."
 "You are Apache, too, then?"
 "Yes, me Apache."
 "Do you want to go back to your home?"
 "Ugh! yes. Mauna's heart is sad. She did not love Big Foot and did not want to be his wife. Ugh! Big Foot dead now."

"You are free as the wind, Mauna," said Burke, cutting the cords that bound her nut-brown hands.

A great light of joy flashed in her great black eyes as she looked into his face.

"The young paleface warrior is a great brave," she said. "His enemies fly before him. They fall before his rifle. His name will be great when he grows older. Mauna is far away from her people. She cannot find her way back alone. She will stay with the young paleface brave. She will cook his meals and—"

"No—no—that cannot be," said Burke, shaking his head. "I am warring against the Piutes, and may be killed at any moment. You must go back to your people. I will take you back to your father, Mauna."

"Mauna will not forget the young paleface warrior. She will sing of him to the Apache maidens, and will remember his voice, which is music in her ears."

Burke looked at her in no little admiration, for she was a splendid looking brown beauty. Had his mind not been impressed by the beauty of Bessie Milligan, he might have concluded, Indian though she was, to let her remain and cook his meals. But that could not be. His mission was one of vengeance, and he had made an oath he dared not violate.

"See that trail, Mauna," he said, pointing to the horse trail he was following. "I am following that to get the horse. Can you walk far?"

"Yes, Mauna can walk and never get tired."

"Can you shoot a rifle?"

"Mauna is the daughter of a great chief. She knows how to use a rifle."

"Then take Big Foot's gun, there. You might have need of it before we reach your father's lodge."

She sprang forward and picked up the rifle and accoutrements. Burke saw at a glance that she knew how to handle the weapon.

"You'll make a great brave," he remarked, smiling.

It pleased her. A bright smile overspread her face.

"Mauna is ready," she said.

"Come on then. We will follow this trail," and he led the way farther into the woods. She followed in his footsteps without uttering a word. He would turn and speak to her occasionally, so kindly that she never failed to smile and show her appreciation.

Two hours later they came up with the stray pony. He was very gentle, and was easily caught.

"That's good so far," said Burke, "but we want another one. Mauna must have a pony, too."

"Mauna can walk—all Indian maidens walk."

"Yes, I know that. But I am not an Indian. White men walk and let their maidens ride. Mauna shall ride, too."

There was a lariat around the pony's neck. Burke fashioned it into a bridle.

"Now come here, Mauna," he said.

She came up to his side.

He took her in his arms and seated her on the pony's back, saying:

"You are tired—follow me now," and without waiting to hear more from her, darted off into the woods again, leaving her to follow him as best she could.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE CAVE ONCE MORE.

Burke trudged along through the forest as fast as his business would allow. His business was to look for the trail of another horse. With another Indian pony he would have been willing to set out at once to escort the Apache maiden to her home.

"She's an Indian," he muttered to himself, as he made his way through the woods; "but a girl for all that. I can't have the heart to desert her and leave her to make her way back alone. Ah! Here's another trail—two—three horses this time! Do you see that, Mauna?"

"Yes, me see trail, three horses," she replied, looking down at the trail. "Warriors on horses, too!"

He led the way on the trail of the three horses, which led him back in the direction of the cavern where he had had such a terrible experience only a few days before.

Mauna followed as noiselessly as she could, being on the back of the Indian pony.

At last they came in sight of the cave. At the same time Burke beheld a little, thin wreath of smoke just beyond the entrance. He stopped and looked first at the smoke and then at Mauna.

"Warriors there," she whispered.

"Stay here," said Burke, motioning to her.

He then went forward, keeping well in the bushes, and tried to get a glimpse of the owners of the fire that made the smoke. As he approached he saw three Indian ponies standing near the fire, and a moment later he caught a glimpse of three stalwart Piute warriors. They were sitting near the fire, cooking a couple of rabbits for supper. It was now growing twilight, and Burke saw that something must be done at once. He went back to Mauna and said:

"There's three Piute warriors there. Will you shoot one of them?"

"Yes—Mauna shoot Piute."

"Come on, then," and he assisted her to the ground from the back of the pony.

She seemed somewhat surprised at his politeness toward her. Indians never show any consideration toward their women.

She followed him round to a point where they could get a good view of the three warriors as they sat by the fire.

"You shoot the big fellow on that rock over there," he whispered to her.

She nodded her head.

"All right."

Both raised their rifles and took deliberate aim.

Burke had no sympathy whatever for Piutes. He regarded them as human wolves that ought to be killed on sight. He had sworn eternal vengeance to the tribe, and now he was simply keeping his oath.

Crack!

Crack!

The two rifles exploded almost as one piece, and two savages rolled over on the ground, whilst a third sprang to his feet and glared around in the direction whence came the shots.

To prevent his escape to the woods, Burke drew his pistol, took a deliberate aim, and fired.

The bullet struck him in the right eye and entered his brain. He staggered back and fell in the agonies of death.

"That settles them!" cried Burke, delighted at the nerve and coolness of the Apache maiden. "Mauna, you are a great brave!" and he threw his arms around her neck and kissed her.

"Mauna will go on the warpath with the young paleface warrior," she said. "He take her away from Big Foot. She his. She no like Big Foot. Heap like young paleface rave."

Burke made no reply, but stepped forward and secured the three ponies. He wanted to make sure of them.

"Look out for the rabbits," he remarked to her, as she came up to the fire. "I will secure these guns."

He took them and carried them into the cave, where he concealed them in a secure place.

Then he returned to the fire.

The rabbits were done brown, and Mauna had laid them on piece of clean bark which she had pulled from a fallen tree.

"Ah! They smell good," he said. "I've got a splendid appetite. Here, Mauna, you take that one. I'll eat this one," and he seated himself on the log and commenced cutting up his rabbit.

"Why don't you sit down, Mauna?" he asked, "and eat your supper? I know you must be hungry."

She glared at him as if in the greatest amazement.

Shall Mauna eat with the great warrior?" she asked.

"Yes, Mauna. My people give the place of honor to their women. They work for their women, and love them so much that they never speak cross to them.

She opened wide her eyes and said:

"The young warrior is wise. His people are wise. They will live when the red men have all passed away. Mauna is sorry she is not a paleface, for then the young warrior would love her."

Burke made no reply, but motioned her to eat, and fell to himself. She followed his example, feeling so highly honored by being allowed to eat with him that she ate as much as he could. The two rabbits did not make much of a show, except in the way of picked bones, after the meal was ended.

"That was a good supper, Mauna," said Burke, when he had finished.

"Heap good," she replied.

"If we had some water, now, I would feel better."

"Yes—water do heap good."

"There's a fine spring in the cave. Let's go and get some."

"Where cave?" she asked.

"Come with me, and I will show you."

He took a torch from the fire and led the way to the cave.

Mauna walked by his side and entered the place with him.

They went to the spring and drank copiously of the clear, cold water.

"Heap good water," she remarked, after drinking.

"Yes—good water," and then Burke told her of his recent adventure in the cave with Kit Carson and Hank Mundy. At the mention of Kit Carson's name she looked around quickly and exclaimed:

"You see him?"

"Who?"

"Carson—great warrior. All red mans fear him."

"Yes—he is my friend."

She looked scared for a moment, and then murmured:

"Him great brave—kill all red mans."

"Mauna," said Burke, turning to the maiden, "Kit Carson never troubles the red man until the red man does wrong. The Indian makes war on white people, and Kit Carson goes on the warpath to punish them. If the red men will let the whites alone, the whites will not trouble them."

"White men drive all red mans toward the setting sun," said she, a look of sadness coming over her face. "Once the red man owned all the land to where the sun rises out of the great waters. The palefaces came and drove them away toward the setting sun. They are poor, and have no more good

land. They must all go to the happy hunting-ground, where palefaces no come."

Burke was astonished at her volubility as well as knowledge of the history of her people. He had spent seven years among the Piutes, and had often heard their old medicine men talk in the same strain. This was the first time, however, he had seen an Indian maiden posted in the traditions of her tribe.

He shook hands with her and led her out of the cave again.

Out by the fire again he explained to her that they must put the horses in the cave and sleep there with them, if they wanted to find them in the morning. They then proceeded to run the animals in.

CHAPTER XVII.

HUNTING THE PIUTES.

The ponies secured, Burke selected a niche in the cave for Mauna to sleep in, where she would be in no danger of being trampled on by them. Then he laid down in another niche near the entrance. Before doing so, however, he stretched a cord across the mouth of the cavern and tied it to a finger of his left hand. Anyone entering would naturally run against the string, and thus awake him.

Feeling sure that he would thus be on guard, as well as fast asleep, the young scout gave way to a train of thought that carried him back to the home of his early childhood. He lay there thinking, thinking for hours, and then dropped off to sleep.

When he awoke he found Mauna standing by his side, gazing earnestly into his face.

"The young warrior sleeps well," she said, as his eyes met hers.

"Yes, I slept well," he said, rising up and kissing her. His demonstration filled her with inexpressible joy; she danced like a little child, saying:

"Mauna's heart is glad."

Burke looked around in the dim light of the cave and saw that everything was right. The ponies were there, and no intruders had shown up during the night.

"We must have some breakfast, Mauna," he remarked. "Wait here till I get something," and, taking his rifle, he started out of the cave into the open air. The morning was bright and clear.

Thinking he would find game more readily by following the stream that came from the spring in the cave, he made his way in that direction. He soon demonstrated the wisdom of the movement, for he had not gone two hundred yards ere he sighted two large fat bucks. He quickly aimed and fired at one—the nearest. The beautiful animal sprang several feet in the air and fell to the earth in the agonies of death—shot through the heart.

"That's venison steak for a week," said Burke, starting to go forward and bleed the carcass.

Crack!

A rifle-shot back at the cave startled him.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed. "The cave is attacked! That shot may have killed the girl!"

He quickly reloaded his rifle so as to be ready for any emergency. Then he commenced creeping through the woods toward the cave again.

When near enough to command a view of the spot he was surprised at seeing Mauna standing over the dead carcass of a buck, which she had shot.

That was the shot that had so startled him. That she

might not know how much he had been concerned about it he crept back to the deer he had slain, and proceeded to cut off the hams.

"She is a brave girl," he muttered to himself, "and may be of great service to me in a scrimmage, for she can handle a rifle like an old hunter."

Taking the two hams on his shoulders he returned to the cave.

"Oh, Mauna has killed one!" she cried, with childish glee, as soon as she caught sight of him.

"Mauna is a great brave," he said. "We shall have meat enough now."

"Yes—me cure it good," she replied, taking his knife and cutting off several slices to broil for breakfast.

Burke built up a fire, and then she arranged the steaks on spits in such a way as to cook them evenly and deliciously. She was a splendid cook in Indian style, and soon had the steaks done.

Burke enjoyed the breakfast very much, talking and laughing with the dusky maiden, who assured him that she was in no hurry to get back to her people.

"Where the young white warrior goes, Mauna will go, too. She hunt, and shoot, and kill his enemies. She will cook his meals."

"I am afraid you could not stand it, Mauna," said he, shaking his head.

"Mauna heap strong—no 'fraid warriors—shoot like brave and stay with white warrior."

Burke did not like to tell her she could not stay with him and thus render her miserable. He liked her company too well for that. He thought it best, however, to let her remain until he got a chance to either send or take her to her people.

"We must go over to the Piute country to look for my pard," he said to her. "I think they have got him, and I want to help him out."

"Me know. Me go—me cure meat for long run," she said, and then she commenced cutting up the four venison hams and drying the strips before the fire, which she made larger and hotter for the purpose.

Burke watched her, and was surprised at her dexterity. She had the whole four hams cured by noon, greatly to his astonishment.

"Hanged if she isn't a useful hand in camp," he muttered to himself, as he watched her work. "It was a good thing for me that I shot her abductors. I guess I will have to keep her along with us when Hank and Kit Carson join us again. Mr. Carson may object. If he does, I'll take her to her people, if she will go."

When the meat was all cured, she took deerskin thongs and tied the strips into small bales, each being incased in a covering of dry grass, which protected them from the sun and insects. Then she tied the bales together so they would hang over the ponies' backs, either before or behind the rider.

"Mauna is wise," he said, by way of praise of her work. "Her husband will call her his brave squaw."

"Me no have red man for husband," she replied, with an emphasis that told him that she had a will of her own.

He brought the ponies out of the cave and selected two of the best. The others he determined to turn loose to graze in wild freedom.

Strapping the bales of cured venison on the two ponies, he seated Mauna on one and then mounted the other.

"Now come on," he said to her, leading off in a northwest direction. She followed without asking any questions, and in a couple of hours they struck the outskirts of the timber. He followed the edge of the prairie till he struck the place where he had seen the Piute trail the day before.

"We will follow this trail," he said to Mauna, leading off across the prairie.

The Apache maiden followed along behind him in profound silence till some ten or twelve miles were passed. Away from the distance, on their left, was another strip of timber. Above it a thin bluish column of smoke could be seen. Burke, however, did not see it till Mauna called his attention to it. They he looked at it for a minute or two.

"Mauna's eyes are as keen as they are beautiful!" he said. "She can see afar off like the eagle."

Following the direction of the smoke, they soon came to the heaviest part of the woods, where their progress was necessarily slow. They pushed on steadily, however, and a little while before sunset came to a small village of Piutes. There were about twenty lodges in a clearing, on the left bank of a large creek.

From a thicket on the edge of the clearing they could see that there were but a few warriors in the village.

"I've never seen this village before," whispered Burke to his companion. "We will wait till the stars come out and then go in and see how many warriors are there."

She nodded assent, and then they both waited for the approach of darkness ere making another move.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RESCUED IN THE DARK.

They did not have long to wait. The dense forest all around them spread a somber shadow of night over the little village even before the stars peeped out.

A few dusky children, naked as when they were born, played around some of the lodges, and a buck was seen making love to one of the village maidens. But there was every indication that the warriors were absent, either on the hunt or warpath. A few old men, and perhaps two or three young bucks, might be at home.

When it grew dark, Burke Miller resolved to steal in among the lodges and see what he could find out. He knew the language well, and could understand every word he could hear.

Mauna was told to remain where she was till he came back, and she said she would. The night grew very dark, for soon after the stars came out black clouds came up and obscured them. Burke liked it all the better, and was soon among the lodges.

The women, fearing rain, had called their children in, and now everything was quiet. There was a light in every lodge, and numerous crevices enabled the young scout to observe everything that was going on inside of them.

He passed from one lodge to another, and found but few old men in them.

In one, however, he heard voices of men. Peeping through a crevice he was staggered at seeing five Piute warriors sitting around smoking their pipes and a prisoner lying on the ground between them, bound hands and feet, and tied to stakes driven in the earth.

Going around to another crevice, he peered through at the face of the prisoner.

"Hank Mundy!" he gasped almost loud enough to be heard by the five painted warriors. Hank alone heard the words, and quickly turned his eyes in the direction whence they came.

Burke stared and listened.

He could hear every word that was said.

From what he heard, he inferred that they were only wait-

for the return of a large war party, when they would run the prisoner at the stake.

Burke turned and made his way back to the place where he had left Mauna. He found her all right.

"My friend is there a prisoner?" he whispered to her. "He is a great brave. We must kill the five warriors and take him away."

"Yes—the paleface warrior must not die."

Just then the rain began to fall in huge drops.

"Now is the best time; come on."

She followed him back into the village, and peered into the lodges with him.

When they reached the lodge in which Hank was a prisoner, they found that three of the warriors were preparing to go to other lodges, where their wives were.

Burke heard them talking about it and quietly waited for them to go, which they did in a few minutes, leaving two of their number on guard. Two were enough, when it was known how well the prisoner was bound down to stakes driven into the ground.

As soon as they were gone, Burke drew his bowie and made a noise at the door of the lodge so as to attract the attention of one of the guards, as though one of the others wanted to see him.

Sure enough one of them arose and stepped outside in the rain. Before he could utter a word Burke drew his sharp knife across his throat with such force as to almost sever his head from his shoulders.

He staggered forward and fell to the earth without a groan. To lose no more time, Burke stepped into the lodge to dispose of the remaining guard. The Piute, thinking he was his comrade returning, did not even look up.

Swish!

His head was almost severed by the blow of the bowie.

"By gum, pard!" exclaimed Hank, "yer done thet han'some, didn't!"

"Come, get up; quick!" whispered Burke, cutting the bonds that bound him to the stakes.

He was so stiff that Burke had to assist him to his feet.

"Arm yourself and come with me," said the young scout. "We must get away from here at once."

"All right, Mauna," Burke whispered to the Apache maiden, "come away now."

She followed him and Hank to the edge of the woods. Here she was introduced to Hank in the dark.

Mundy declared he could catch a pony from those belonging to the warriors in the village, and proceeded to do so. Burke and the girl agreed to wait for him where they were until he returned.

They waited for ten minutes, not knowing in the dark just where he had gone. Pretty soon they heard a disturbance among the horses on their left. They listened for some five minutes more, and then were startled by a fierce yell from a Piute warrior.

"Consarn yer yaller picter!" they heard Hank Mundy exclaim, "take that an' eat it!" and then they heard a blow and a fall on the ground of something that sounded very much like a human body dropping heavily.

They dared not leave their place for fear Hank would miss them. So they remained.

In a few minutes other wild yells escaped from the few warriors in the village.

A rush was made to see if the prisoner was safe.

Of course the discovery made there caused the wildest kind of a hubbub.

The welkin rang with fierce yells. The women added their shrill voices to the general din, and in another minute or two the quiet village was a perfect pandemonium of sounds.

But it was too dark for the warriors to pursue.

They made no attempt to do so, but contented themselves with yelling defiance at the prisoner and his unknown rescuers.

CHAPTER XIX.

A WOMAN AT THE BOTTOM OF IT.

Dark as it was, Hank Mundy knew the way back to where Burke Miller and the Indian girl awaited him.

"All right, Mundy?" Burke asked.

"Yes, I run ag'in one of ther cusses an' had ter cut him open."

"Why didn't you cut his throat and stop his noise?"

"The yaller skunk was so doubled up I didn't know which end his head was on," was the reply.

"Come away before they find us out," said Burke, leading the way in the woods.

It was so dark that it was impossible for them to see each other. It was only by slow traveling and keeping within sound of each other that they managed to keep together.

Fortunately Burke took a direct route toward the prairie, and, after three hours' hard work, they reached it.

"By gum!" exclaimed Hank, as he found himself in the wet grass of the prairie, "we are in luck, my boy!"

"How?" Burke asked.

"We've struck ther prairie, pard."

"Have we?"

"Yes, don't yer see?"

"No. I don't see anything."

"Eyes no good to-night," remarked Mauna. "All rain, no stars."

"Right, by gum!" ejaculated Hank. "It's so dark I can feel it."

"Mundy," Burke asked, "do you know where Kit Carson is?"

"No, but he's in this timber, or was yesterday."

"The thunder you say!"

"Yes, he was following us when a party of warriors went after him. I hain't hearn of 'im since."

"Then we will stay here till morning!" said Burke.

"What! In all this rain?"

"Yes, where can we find shelter from it?"

Hank thought a moment.

"But ther gal?" he said. "She can't stand it."

"Me stay, me like rain," said Mauna.

"Pard," said Burke. "Mauna is a great warrior. She can shoot and kill equal to the best warrior, white or black or red, in all the land."

"Is that so, pard?"

"Yes. She killed a Piute warrior yesterday, and a fine deer this morning. She is a great brave."

Mauna heard every word, as Burke intended she should, and was highly gratified, for, like a true daughter of Eve, she was very susceptible to flattery.

Burke knew that, and he wanted to encourage her under the discouraging circumstances in which they were placed.

"Let's go back under the trees, then," suggested Hank.

"Yes, the rain won't strike us so hard there," and all three moved back under the two or three large trees that stood just on the edge of the timber.

"Why, it doesn't rain any hyer!" exclaimed Hank, as he stepped under a large tree.

"Only a drop now and then," said Burke. "The leaves must be large and plentiful overhead. We are lucky, indeed."

"Lucky an' hungry," said Hank. "I am hungry enough to chaw my pony's tail."

"Plenty meat," sententiously remarked Mauna, promptly removing a four-pound strip of the cured venison ham she had prepared at the cave from the pack on her pony and handing it to him. It was so dark that she had to press in against him for him to take it.

"What's this?" he asked.

"Meat," she answered.

He seized it and carried it to his nose.

"Venison, by gum!" he exclaimed, drawing his knife and proceeding to reduce the size and weight of the piece she had given him. He ate heartily, saying:

"By gum! This is ther sweetest meat I ever ate!"

"Mauna cured it yesterday at the cave," said Burke.

"She ought ter be a white gal, by gum! Sich meat curin' would get her a husband anywhar."

"Me kill deer, too," said the simple-hearted daughter of the Apaches.

"Bully gal!" ejaculated the Yankee scout, with his mouth full of meat, at which Burke went almost into convulsions. But the darkness prevented his desperate efforts to conceal his laughter from Mauna from being seen by her.

When he had finished eating, he handed about half the chunk back to the Indian girl, saying:

"Thankee, Mauna. My heart is heap much glad, and my belly is full. May yer allers hev more'n yer kin eat, an' as many lovers as yer kin love."

"Ugh! Paleface heap big talk. Too much eat, too much talk."

"Good for you, Mauna!" said Burke, laughing. "He feels happy now. He is a great warrior, though, and knows how to fight."

"Heap talk too," said she, an idea having entered her mind that he was disposed to make fun of her.

"Yes, heap talk, heap eat, heap fight, an' heap love the gals," remarked Hank.

"Heap big fool, too," quietly observed Mauna.

"That's so. Mauna has a wise head. Great Medicine."

"Mauna shoot paleface fool!" angrily retorted the girl, quickly snapping her rifle at him. Fortunately the rain had wet the powder, or the Yankee scout's career would have ended then and there.

Burke heard the lock snap, and sprang toward her, grasping her rifle and wrenching it from her.

"Great God, Mauna!" he exclaimed, "would you shoot my friend?"

"Dern the wench!" growled Hank, when he learned she had tried to shoot him. "Who'd a thought she'd shoot?"

"Mauna heap mad!" she said to Burke.

"Mauna must not get mad," and Burke put his arms around her and kissed her in a manner to make her very amiable again. "He is your friend and mine. He will fight for you—a great brave. Shake hands with him now. Shake, Mundy."

Hank shook hands with her to please Burke. He didn't care a snap about the girl, for her sex could not excuse the fact with him that she was an Indian. He hated all Indians. He had been captured by them a half dozen times; three times was he saved from death at the stake when the fagots had been piled up around him.

But that unfortunate grip of his again got him into trouble. He squeezed her hand till the joints cracked. A cry of pain escaped her, and the next moment with her left hand, she plunged a scalping-knife into his right shoulder.

"Darnation!" he exclaimed, leaping back. "She's stabbed me!"

"Him mash Mauna's hand! Mauna kill paleface fool!" and she flew at him like a tigress and cut him again.

"Off, yer she-cat!" he cried, giving her a blow with a clenched fist that knocked her senseless to the earth.

"Mundy! Mauna!" cried Burke to both, feeling about the dark, for he could not see either.

"Kill ther red-skinned cat!" hissed Mundy, beside him with anger. "She has stabbed me twice!"

"Where are you, Mauna?" Burke asked.

At that moment he touched her with his foot. Stooping over her, he found her still and silent on the ground.

"Hank Mundy!" he demanded, in firm tones. "What has you done to her? She lies here on the ground."

"She flew at me an' cut me; I knocked her down with fist. Cut her throat, or she'll cut yours some day."

"Hank Mundy, you nearly crushed her hand in that villainous grip of yours, and she resented it. Go your way. I want nothing more to do with you. The man who will tease a woman, insult her, and then treat her as you have treated this poor girl, cannot be a friend of mine.

Hank Mundy was dumfounded with amazement. He liked the young scout who had twice helped to rescue him from certain death, and did not wish to part with him.

"I—I didn't mean to hurt yer, pard," he said. "She me, an'—"

"She ought to have cut your throat," said Burke. "She risked her life to save yours, and this is what she gets for it. I don't like Indians any more than you do, but I don't make war on young Indian girls," and he turned to the prostrate girl again and tried to arouse her.

CHAPTER XX.

BURKE'S STRANGE DISCOVERY.

In a few minutes the Apache maiden recovered consciousness. A few drops of rain spattering her face caused her to open her eyes and groan. Burke could not see her, but could hear.

"Poor Mauna!" said he, bending forward and patting her face. "I am sorry for you. It shall not happen again."

"Mauna—will—kill paleface—bad mans," she said between her groans.

"I can't blame you," replied Burke.

"Mauna will shoot um."

Hank Mundy heard her words, and concluded it was best for him to go away.

"I'll leave yer, pard," he said. "I don't want no trouble with the gal."

"Go to the cave," said Burke; "kill several deer, dry the meat, and wait there till Kit Carson and I come. You'll be safer there than anywhere else."

"All right," said Hank, shouldering his gun, mounting his pony, and starting off over the prairie.

"I'm glad he is gone," muttered the little scout. "He treated her meanly. I don't blame her for cutting him."

Mauna soon got on her feet again, and talked with Burke till daybreak revealed their position. They found themselves in the edge of the timber where they were liable to be seen by any strolling band of redskins.

Luckily for them the heavy rain had obliterated their tracks. But the sun rose in a cloudless sky, and the savages would be out after game.

"We must get back into the woods, Mauna," he said to the maiden. "We may be seen here."

"Yes, go back in woods, Plute no find there."

Her eyes were blackened under the long silken lashes.

used, by the powerful blow Hank Mundy had given her. He was far from beautiful then, but Burke had sympathy for her and was more than ever resolved to see her safe back among her people again.

They ate heartily of the cured venison and then led their ponies into the heart of the timber. Burke had made up his mind to stop a few days in that timber, because Hank Mundy had told him that Kit Carson was somewhere in it. To get with the old scout once more and report all that had happened to him was an all-absorbing desire of Burke Miller. He dearly loved the daring old scout, who, he believed, bore a charmed life.

Mauna grew more cheerful when she found that Hank Mundy had gone away for good. She would have shot him on the spot.

They went inward about a mile, and took up quarters on the banks of the large creek that flowed past the village where they found Mundy a prisoner. The stream was now a rushing torrent, swollen by the heavy rainfall the night before. Still it was not out of its banks, except in some places.

A little below where they stopped, the creek widened out to a small lake nearly a hundred yards wide by some three or four hundred long.

On one side of this lake a shelving rock projected out into the water. The water was quite deep in front of the rock, forming a splendid place to either fish or bathe.

When Burke first saw this little lake it was considerably swollen. He was not able to fully appreciate its many beauties as he was when the waters subsided.

"I wonder the village was not built near this lake," he said to himself a dozen times that day. "Here they could catch all the fish they need; could row and bathe, and have beautiful scenery. There must be some legend that influences them against it. I hope they won't come about here to-day or to-morrow, as I want to rest and wait for Kit Carson."

He selected a very dense thicket to remain concealed in during the day.

"Don't shoot anything unless in self-defense, Mauna," he said to the girl, "for it may betray our presence here."

Of course she was entirely willing to obey him in everything. They could get along forever without quarreling.

The creek had returned to its banks and was now as clear as crystal again. Burke was exceedingly anxious to bathe in the lake. He accordingly told Mauna to remain where she was, in the thicket, whilst he went down to the lake for a swim.

Of course she consented, and he went off down to the shelving rock. The sun was shining bright and clear. He stripped and plunged in. The water was cool and pleasant, and the bath did him great good.

After swimming about some ten minutes or so, he started to crawl out on the rock again. He found that the rock went out a foot down in the water and ended in a sort of shelf. Holding on to the edge, he ran his feet under it as far as he could reach, and, to his astonishment, discovered that his feet were out of the water beneath the rock.

"Why, that's strange!" he said. "I can't understand it," and he kicked up both feet under there to make sure he had made no mistake.

Sure enough he found it as he first discovered.

"Hanged if I don't dive under there and see what it is," he said, drawing his feet out, he went under head first and came out under the rock in a sort of cave-like place. The roof was only a foot or two above the water, but rose higher as it receded from the water. The sunlight on the water outside produced a somber twilight in the cave, which enabled him to see some distance around him.

"By all the stars!" he exclaimed, "this beats anything I

ever saw. Here's a big cave running away back under that rock and hill which I had noticed. As it isn't very close in here there must be some kind of an opening somewhere. If I had on my clothes I would look for it. I would feel safer if I had some kind of a weapon with me, too."

He went as far in as he dared to go naked and unarmed, and found a smooth, sandy floor, as if a stream once flowed over it into the lake beyond.

He became excited and concluded to go back and report to Mauna what he had found. Then, with his clothes on and his trusty bowie in his hand, he would explore the cavern to its furthest limit.

Crawling upon the rock, he quickly dressed himself and hastened to inform the Indian girl of his discovery.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PIUTES RISE UP AND CAST OUT THE RENEGADE.

The little scout found the Apache maiden where he had left her—in the thicket. She had not moved from the spot where she seated herself before he left her.

"Mauna," he said, "I have found a strange and wonderful cave under that rock that shelves out into the water down there on the other side."

She looked up at him in quiet surprise, and waited for him to say more. He did say more, explaining to her everything he had seen under the rock. She grew deeply interested and wanted to go down and explore the cave with him. They could both go if she was not afraid of the water.

"Would you take the dive with me?" he asked.

"Yes, me go where you go," was the reply.

"All right—come on, then," and he led the way down toward the lake. She went along like an eager child, ready to go wherever he dared to lead.

Having their powder in powder-horns, they were not afraid of its being injured by the water. He explained to her how the rock shelved and how they were to get under it.

"I will go in first," he said, "and then come out after you. Hold my rifle and wait here for me."

She took his rifle and pistols to keep till he returned. He kept his bowie and then prepared to make the plunge. In a moment he was out of sight and under the rock.

He came up all right in the cave and climbed upon the sandy beach, where he shook himself like a dog just out of the water. Then he drew his trusty knife and went forward, determined to make one more search for an outlet to this wonderful cave.

Going about one hundred yards, he suddenly saw a little glimmer of light ahead. He pressed forward and found where a natural entrance to the cave had been closed by a huge cottonwood tree which had grown up between the two walls of rock.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed. "That beats anything I ever saw. One can get in and out only by climbing that tree some twenty feet or more. I'm good at climbing." The rocky walls aided him in his efforts, and in another minute or two he was out on the rock above the crevice.

Looking around, he got his bearings and then made his way toward the lake again. He had gone about two hundred yards under the rock, which seemed to be an immense shell.

As he came down toward the lake, Mauna heard his footsteps. Thinking an enemy was approaching, she sprang to her feet, cocked a rifle and prepared to shoot.

"Hold on, Mauna!" he cried.

She knew his voice, and looked at him in dumfounded amazement.

"I found another way for you to go in, Mauna," he said, "so you will not have to take the dive. Come on."

"Young paleface heap wise," she remarked, giving him his weapons and then following him to the tree.

"Come on down this tree," Burke said, as he preceded her in the venture. She followed him promptly and in another minute they were walking together over the smooth, sandy floor of the cavern towards the lake.

The noonday sun shone on the water with such force as to reflect light enough for one to see nearly the entire length of the cave.

Mauna was delighted at the security the place offered, and Burke was of the opinion that it was a safe refuge for them.

"I will go and get our meat," said he, "and throw it down here to you. You can put it away upon a shelf there—that rock—and we can have a good place in which to hide from the Piutes."

"Yes—Mauna wait."

He climbed up the tree again and made his way to the ponies. They were where they had been left. He took the grass bales of meat and carried them to the crevice near the tree and dropped them down. He heard Mauna's voice as they fell. Then he turned and followed the crevice which ran halfway over the rock, as though it had once been split by a convulsion of nature.

The crevice ran in such a way as to shut out the light from above, yet admitted plenty of fresh air.

"The smoke can come up through there without anyone knowing where it comes from," he said, as he stood over the spot and looked around.

Suddenly he heard a yell, and, looking around, saw the renegade Gross, with a band of Indians at his back, staring at him as if he were one from the dead.

"Perdition!" hissed Gross, his eyes stretched to their widest. "Am I followed by his ghost? Who—who are you?"

"I am Burke Miller, renegade!" replied Burke, seeing that his presence alarmed the rascal, who thought him burned to a cinder in the lone hut at the upper end of the timber.

"I—I—thought—you—were dead!" stammered the villain, trembling like a leaf.

"So I am, and so you will be, renegade, traitor, murderer! I go below. You will soon follow. Soon follow—soon follow!" and with that he strode toward the edge of the water, where he stepped off and sank out of sight.

Of course he turned under the rock and in the cave, to the surprise of Mauna, who had been looking for him to come down the tree.

Gross and the Indians were dumfounded. They were rooted to the spot, and stared at the water where the young scout had disappeared, as if they half expected to see him rise again. But the waters became smooth as ever and flowed on as if they had not been disturbed.

The Indians were the same ones who were with the renegade when the hut was burned down over Burke's head. They also knew how he had disposed of Burke's parents, and had been recently made acquainted with Little Hand's oath to avenge his wrongs.

Their superstition now got the better of them. That Burke had returned from his ashes—from the spirit land—to torment the tribe on Gross' account they had not the shadow of a doubt. Had they not seen him go into the hut and not come out again? Did they not dance around as it burned to a heap of glowing coals without his being seen again? And now had they not seen him here on the rock, just as he was that terrible night, acknowledge his death, and quietly disappear under the waters of the lake?

It was more than Piute superstition could stand.

They called a council of the warriors then and there the whole matter was discussed. The chiefs declared the Great Spirit had sent Little Hand back to torment for Gross' crime, and that unless they got rid of their faced ally, they would be beaten by their enemies and would forever escape them.

Gross was amazed.

He couldn't understand how it was with Burke. He thought him burnt to ashes, and now had just seen him go under water as if that was his home. But he saw how the Piutes were drifting. Their superstitious fears were getting the better of them. He could make no defense, for the reason that he could not explain the mystery.

"Ugh!" grunted the warriors. "Gross heap brave was an' Piute's friend. Little Hand come back an' say him follow. Little Hand is wise. Him been with Great Spirit. Great Spirit send him back for Gross. Say soon follow Piute don't make him follow, Piute lose battle, lose all, lose everything. Piute throw Gross in lake an' he follow Little Hand. Piute then make Little Hand glad, and Piute happy."

A general grunt of approbation greeted the proposition. Gross turned pale as death.

"Piutes!" he said, addressing them. "I have been your friend. Have fought for you, and helped you win victory over your enemies. I burned Little Hand. He has gone back. It's me he wants, not you. I will go away. He will follow me, and you will see him no more. I will go to the Apaches, and then you will——"

"Ugh!" grunted a chief. "No go Apache. Him follow Little Hand," and then, uttering a war-whoop, the warrior seized him, bore him to the water's edge and cast him in. He sank out of sight in an instant, and the Piutes saw him no more.

CHAPTER XXII.

PURSUED BY APACHES.

Let us now go back a few days in our story and to the old scout, Kit Carson, after he left Burke Miller and Hank Mundy, to escort Bessie Milligan back to her father.

Joe Milligan, Bessie's father, was an old friend of Carson, whom he had not seen in ten years. The old scout was anxious to see him, as well as to restore his daughter to him.

Mounted on Whirlwind, the fastest horse that ever ate ripe grass, Kit Carson started off with her. She was mounted on Burke Miller's splendid gray, but little less fleet, Whirlwind himself.

Burke and Hank were left together in the little old hut to remain till he returned.

The reader will recollect that Hank was captured and killed off that night by Piutes, and that Burke was besieged, and the hut burnt down over his head.

Well, Kit and Bessie rode leisurely along over the prairie nearly all day, talking about old friends. Late in the afternoon they found themselves approaching a party of five Indians on horseback.

The redskins seemed to want to meet them, and turned their horses' heads in their direction.

"Bessie, girl," said Kit, "you are not afraid to shoot an Indian, are you?"

"No, sir, I am not."

"Well, here's a brace of pistols. Keep them where you can draw them at any moment. They may be all right, if I

ow. I make it a rule never to trust a redskin. If they attempt to interfere with us we must shoot them down before they know what's up. Just watch me, and when I wink at you, draw both pistols and let two redskins know what the fighter of an old scout can do. I will take care of the other two. Can you do that, Bessie?"

"Yes, sir, I think I can," she replied.

"All right then. Don't get excited in the least."

They rode along over the level prairie till they met up with the five Indians.

"How?" exclaimed one of them—the Indian salutation.

"How do?" replied Kit.

"Where going?"

"East," was the reply.

"Ugh!" grunted the leader. "Go with Injun—heap better."

"I prefer to go my way," said Kit. "I don't know you."

"Me big chief," said the redskin, giving a leering glance at Bessie.

"So am I," was Kit's quiet reply.

"Ugh! Heap big lie!"

An Indian reached forward and seized the reins of Bessie's horse. She looked round at Kit. He gave the signal, and they quickly drew their pistols.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

The shots were quick as lightning, all inside of four or five seconds. Four redskins reeled in their saddles. Three tumbled to the ground a few moments later, and the fourth wrenched his horse's neck as though it was his only support.

The fifth Indian was dazed by the calamity that had overtaken his comrades. He looked at Bessie as if he considered her something more than human, and grunted:

"Ugh! Paleface maiden kill Injun. Injun heap big fool!"

With that he turned away and rode like the wind.

Kit would not fire at him. He preferred to let him get away and tell his companions in crime what a palefaced girl had done.

"Bessie," he said, grasping her hand, "you did that like an old veteran. I never saw anyone so cool in my life. If I was a single man, and younger than I am, I would make you my wife, or kill every man you smiled on."

Bessie laughed.

"Why, Mr. Carson!" she exclaimed. "I had to do it, you know; and you told me not to get excited, and I didn't."

"Of course you didn't. You were as cool as Burke Miller would have been."

"Oh, Mr. Carson! There's another band of Indians—a new one or more of them!"

Kit looked around on his left, and found a band of Apaches riding at full speed toward him. They were still some three miles away, but that mattered little to men on horses.

"Yes," he said, "we'll have to run for it, Bessie. Fortunately we have not urged our horses any to-day. Are you a good rider?"

"Oh, yes. I can ride as well as anybody," she replied.

"Then we'll make for yonder timber. The sun is only an hour high. We can dodge them in the timber, and as soon as it gets dark we'll continue on our way."

Both urged their horses forward, and they dashed away in a new style. A wild yell burst from the redskins, and then the pursuit commenced in dead earnest.

But Kit and his fair companion gained steadily every minute.

"Oh, Mr. Carson!" exclaimed Bessie, "we are leaving them far behind! Just look!"

He did look.

"Yes—we are gaining," he said. "But that doesn't matter. They never give up as long as their game is in sight. Keep up with me, and keep cool. Don't get excited."

"Oh! I'll never get excited or uneasy as long as you are with me."

"I am glad to hear that. We'll soon be in the timber, where we can't go so fast."

"Why go into the timber then?"

"Because I want to shake them off. If we push straight ahead for your father's camp, we'll lead those red devils right there, too, and a hard fight will follow. I don't wish to do that."

"You are right, Mr. Carson."

"I am glad you think so. Here we are in the edge of the timber. Just keep right along behind me now, and we'll get through all right. Look out now, that the limbs don't drag you off your horse."

They both plunged into the timber, and were lost to the sight of their pursuers.

CHAPTER XXIII.

KIT RESTORES BESSIE TO HER PARENTS.

Bessie Milligan was a brave girl, and had unlimited faith in the grand old scout who was leading the way. She plunged into the thicket and bravely followed close behind his horse, sometimes lying flat on her horse's neck to avoid being raked by the limbs of the trees.

The Indians gained the timber only a quarter of a mile behind them. Bessie could plainly hear their yells behind her, but she never once let her fears trouble her.

It began to grow dark.

The sun had sunk below the horizon, and the stars began to peep out.

"Keep close behind me," said Kit. "It will soon be too dark for them to follow our trail, and then we will be all right. Are you tired?"

"No, sir. I could ride all night."

"Come on, then."

In another hour it was dark; so much so that Kit had to dismount and lead her horse, to prevent her from becoming separated from him in the bushes.

"Ah! here's the prairie again. Now we are safe. We can go straight ahead. They cannot follow our trail in this darkness."

He mounted Whirlwind again, and started at full speed across the prairie.

Bessie kept close behind him, and heard no more from the pursuers.

The stars enabled Kit to keep on in the right direction, and ere midnight he came in sight of the timber that skirted the creek on which her father's camp was pitched.

"There's the creek, Bess," he said; "we'll soon be there."

She urged her horse forward till he was neck-and-neck with Whirlwind.

They entered the timber and forded the creek.

The camp was some miles above them, and so they pushed on up stream, going more leisurely now that their pursuers were left far behind.

At last they came in sight of the campfire.

"There they are!" she cried.

"Yes—that's the camp," Kit Carson said. "But we must be careful, or we'll get a bullet from someone. They are in no humor for any redskin to be prowling around them. I'll give them a signal and see if Joe will know it."

Kit then gave a signal.

Several men were on guard. Some were rolled in blankets on the ground near the fire.

One of the men, a tough-looking man, about fifty years of age, standing near the fire, turned briskly around on hearing the signal, and motioned to the others to be silent.

Kit repeated the signal.

"That's Kit Carson, or I've lost my memory!" exclaimed the man. "I'll know more in another minute," and then he gave an answering signal.

Kit promptly replied.

"Kit Carson!" yelled the old man, darting forward. "My old friend! Heaven bless you! Come in, come in!"

Kit sprang from his horse and was clasped in the arms of his old friend.

"Joe, my old friend!" he cried. "I knew you would be glad to see me, for I've brought Bessie with me!"

"Father! father!" cried Bessie, springing off her horse and throwing herself into her father's arms.

"My child! my child!" sobbed the old man, his eyes full of tears and his heart up in his throat. "Go to your mother."

Bessie flew to the wagon where her mother was sleeping, and such a happy meeting it was! Mother and daughter, locked in each other's arms, cried and laughed till both were exhausted. The other women in the other wagons came in for their share, and there was a general rejoicing all round.

Bessie had to relate her adventures before the excited women slept. Around the campfire Kit told how he had found her in charge of her captors and rescued her. But when he told how she had shot down two Apache warriors with her own hands they all declared her a heroine of the true type.

Joe Milligan sat up all night before the fire talking with his old pard. Those two brave men had been in peril together so often that they were like brothers in their affection for each other.

When morning came there was a happy reunion around the campfire. All were together again. Joe Milligan had returned from a search for his daughter only a couple of hours before he heard Kit's signal.

"Kit, old pard," said Joe, "you must stay with us a few days. We are going to move leisurely across the prairie, and want you to go with us."

"Can't do it, Joe," said Kit. "I left my little scout and Hank Mundy wounded in that old hut in the upper end of the cavern timber. I must go back to him and take his horse. I promised him I would do so, and you know what a promise is with me."

"Yes, yes. I know enough not to say any more about it, pard."

After eating a hearty breakfast Kit Carson bade goodby to his friends, mounted his gallant steed and rode away to return to Burke Miller and Hank Mundy.

On the way back he fell in with the same party of Apaches that pursued Bessie and he the day before. Of course they gave pursuit, and of course Whirlwind showed them his heels and left them far behind. In less than four hours he was out of sight, and the redskins wondered what kind of horse the paleface rode.

It was near sunset when he reached the timber in which he had left the little scout the day before. He turned and made his way to the upper end, where stood the long-deserted old hut.

When he approached the spot the odor of smoke was very distinct. A minute or two later he saw the smoldering embers of the hut.

"My God!" he exclaimed, as he gazed at the heap of embers and ashes. "They are either killed or captured. They must have been surrounded last night, probably while they were

asleep. My poor little scout! If that renegade gets yoYe his power again your days will be numbered. I'll hunt s up, though, and see if I am in time to render you a serv

He dismounted and searched around for a trail of the is skins. But it was now too dark for him to follow it, he though he should find it. He therefore concluded to spend B night there and take a new start at daybreak.

The next morning he found the trail, for the redskins r t on ponies, and followed them to the timber where Burke Mauna had gone on the same errand. He found a large ph of Piutes, with Hank Mundy as a prisoner in their midst, yo

They were too strong for him to attack, so he was fo he to follow them about, and wait for a chance to strike a b d

"But what have they done with my little scout?" he a e himself a score of times during the day. "If they have kie him, I'll make them feel the weight of my vengeance. N roast that renegade at the stake like an Indian!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

KIT CARSON'S DISCOVERY.

Two days passed, during which time Kit Carson hung H the trail of the renegade and Piutes, waiting for an oppo nity to rescue Hank Mundy from their clutches. By s means the renegade ascertained that Kit was in the timb and instantly resolved to either kill or capture him.

Hank overheard his instructions to the warriors, and krd then that Kit was on their trail. Such was his confidence the great scout that he was perfectly easy in his mind as the result.

The renegade took all but five warriors with him, and w on Kit's trail. They pushed him so hard that he was co pelled to leave the timber and cut across the prairie tow the cavern timber several miles away.

It was during that pursuit, on a stormy night, that Bu and Mauna succeeded in rescuing Hank, and escaping in dark with him.

Of the quarrel between Hank and Mauna, and of the latt attempt to kill him, the reader already knows. Hank them and made his way over the prairie to the cave, there await the coming of Burke, as soon as he could get rid of Indian girl.

Hank reached the cave about sunrise, tired, and drench to the skin. He went in, and was startled at hearing the miliar voice of Kit Carson cry out:

"Hello, Mundy! How did you get away?"

"Kit Carson, by gum!" exclaimed Hank. "Sculp me o ain't glad ter see yer, pard!"

They grasped hands like two friends who had just escap a terrible peril.

"How did you get away, Mundy?" Kit eagerly asked.

"The little scout done it," was the reply.

"Thank God! He's alive, then?"

"Yes—very lively, too."

"Where is he?"

"I left him an' his pard in ther timber over thar at m night.

"His pard! Who is his pard?"

"A Injun girl—as cantankerous a wench as ever slung kittle."

Kit was astonished.

"What does it mean?" he asked.

"Some Apaches was a runnin' away with her an' he wip 'em out. She sticks to 'im like tar, an' fights like an hunter agin the Piutes. Do yer see them cuts, pard?"

"Yes," replied Kit, looking at two flesh wounds that had bled so freely that he was more than half covered with gore. "Waal, now, thet 'ere gal done that; she's a screamer, she is."

He then explained to Kit how it came about, and why he left Burke in the timber.

"I told him yer was in ther timber, an' he swore he'd stay thar till he found yer."

"Then I'll go back at once," said Kit. "He may get caught by the band that was after me. You stay here if you can, and let your wounds heal. If you be away back in the farther end of the cave, the redskins will never find you even if you see a hundred come in. They generally stay about the spring and the entrance. You have provisions enough for a day or two, have you not?"

"No; only enough for one day," was the reply.

"Then I'll see if I cannot get you a couple of venison hams," and the great scout took his rifle and went out into the woods.

A half hour later Hank heard the keen, whip-like crack of his rifle down the branch that ran from the cave. Another half hour passed, and Hank began to wonder what had happened to detain him so long. At last, however, he saw him coming, loaded down with a huge bearskin and a couple of large bear hams.

"Here's a warm bed for you to sleep on, Hank," said Kit, dropping the skin at his feet, "and here's meat enough to last you a month. Go to work and cure it. Here's a huge pile of fagots inside here. Make a fire and cure the meat. I'll broil a steak for breakfast and then be off."

He built a fire and hastily broiled a steak for his breakfast. Hank broiled several more for him to take along with him, and had them ready by the time he was about to start.

Shaking hands with Hank, Kit sprang into the saddle and set out in the direction of the timber, whence the renegade and his Piutes had driven him the day before.

He reached the timber by high noon, and turned his horse loose to follow him at leisure. He knew that Whirlwind would not let the redskins put their hands on him; so he was safer loose than tied.

He spent the whole day—or what was left of the day—searching for Burke and the Indian girl. He failed to find any trace of them, but found that the renegade and his Piutes were running about through the timber in search of someone.

"They are looking for Hank Mundy and his rescuers," muttered the old scout, as he watched them from a secure hiding-place. "I'll follow them and see what they will do."

He was not more than a mile from the little lake when he first caught sight of the Piutes. They made direct for the lake, and he followed. When in sight of the lake, near the great shelving rock that sloped down into the water, he heard yell escape the renegade.

Looking hard ahead, Kit was astonished at seeing Burke Miller standing with folded arms, unarmed, so far as rifle was concerned, and scowling at the renegade.

"My God!" he gasped; "they will kill or capture him! That's the matter? Why does he stand there that way? Ah! He is hemmed in. His only way of escape is to swim the lake. They would riddle him with bullets. But where's that Apache girl? I don't see her about."

He was too far away to hear what was said between Burke and the renegade.

But a few minutes later he saw Burke step off the rock into the lake and disappear from sight.

The Piutes ran forward and glared at the spot as if expecting to see him come up again.

One, two, three, five minutes passed, and the waters of the lake became as smooth as glass again.

"By all the mysteries!" muttered Kit, "this beats any-

thing I ever saw. The Piutes are terribly excited. They are holding a council. One of them is speaking. Sorry I can't get near enough to hear what is said."

He waited and watched.

"The renegade is speaking now," he said, after awhile. "The Piutes grunt and shake their heads. Good Lord! they have seized him and are going to throw him into the lake! There! In he goes! By my soul, he has gone down just as Burke did!"

Dumfounded with astonishment, Kit Carson remained in his place of concealment until the Piutes went away, which they did as soon as they saw that Gross did not rise to the surface again.

Then he went to the spot and looked carefully around. He examined the rock, went to the edge of the water, and looked back up toward the top of the rock. Taking up a large rock, weighing at least half a hundred pounds, he let it fall at his feet. A hollow sound, very different from that which would have come from a solid rock, was the result.

He chuckled audibly.

His bronzed face was wreathed in smiles.

"Burke, my boy—my little scout," he said, "that was well done. A fine trick, and the renegade is in your hands a prisoner. I'll go down, too, and see how you are going to run him," and laying his rifle down on the rock the old scout bravely stepped off into the water and sank out of sight.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LITTLE SCOUT CAPTURES THE RENEGADE.

When Burke Miller stepped off the rock into the lake he was conscious of the fact that he had a way of escape that the renegade and his savage allies had not dreamed of. He knew that the huge cottonwood tree in the mouth of the cave was a guarantee that the cavern was unknown to them. Had it been known and used, the tree would never have been allowed to grow there. Hence he had no fear of pursuit, as no Indian would attempt to follow a man in such a direction.

The moment he came up under the rock, he climbed out on the sand and whistled to Mauna. Surprised at his coming through the water, she ran forward.

"Why you come that way?" she asked.

"Piutes up there, Mauna," he replied, pointing upward.

She opened her eyes in surprise. Then she ran to the rifles and brought them both to him.

"Kill Piutes," she said, looking as though she meant what she said.

Burke knew she was game, but said:

"They won't come down here, Mauna. Piute coward. He dare not follow me. Sit down here by me, and let's see if any of them dare dive into the water."

She sat down on the sandy beach and talked in low tones.

In the meantime an important discussion was going on overhead. The Piutes were discussing the idea of sending Gross, the renegade, after Little Hand.

Suddenly Burke and Mauna heard a dull splash, and saw a dark form go down from the edge of the rock.

Burke sprang to his feet, and stood ready to use his trusty bowie on any foe that had the temerity to land in his domain.

He quickly saw that the dark form was that of a man. But he had risen up against the rock, not far enough in to rise above the surface of the water.

The desperate struggles of the man brought him no nearer inside—nor outside.

"He's drowning!" exclaimed Burke, as the struggles suddenly relaxed.

"Him drown—yes," remarked Mauna. "Piute no good swim—heap big fool."

A sudden impulse seized Burke. He resolved to capture the Indian, restore him to consciousness, get information out of him, and then kill him.

He sprang into the water, seized the man, and dragged out on the beach.

"Great heaven!" he gasped, "it's Gross himself. I can restore him! He isn't dead yet!" and he instantly went to work rolling him on his stomach. "We must save him, Mauna! We must save him! Here, help me this way!"

"Yes, Mauna help!" and they both laid hold, rolling him about till large quantities of water came out of his mouth and nostrils.

Then he groaned and moved his arms and legs.

"Thank God he's not drowned!" ejaculated Burke. "Get me those deerskin thongs, Mauna, that are tied around the meat in the grass bales."

Mauna sprang up and ran to the spot where she had laid the bundles of meat which Burke had thrown down into the cave through the entrance by the cottonwood tree. To remove the thongs that bound them together and hurry back to the young scout was the work of but a few moments.

Burke took them and proceeded to tie the hands of the unconscious man in such a manner as to render escape impossible. Then he tied his ankles together in a similar manner.

"Now I have got you, you renegade!" he exclaimed, dropping down on the sand near the rascal. "Great God! Such good fortune! I didn't dream of it. I can now keep my oath, and by the eternal stars I'll do it! Andrew Gross, do you know me? Do you know Burke Miller, you cowardly renegade?"

Gross opened his eyes and stared at him. He had recovered consciousness.

"Do you know me, Andrew Gross?" Burke asked again.

"Yes," was the feeble reply. "Where am I?"

"You are with me."

"Where?" his eyes opening wider each moment.

"In a cave under the rock. How came you here?"

"The Piutes threw me in the water after you. Were you burned up in that fire?"

"No. I went into a hole under the hut, and never got scorched. I'm all right. How are you?"

Gross was not a little disconcerted by the words and actions of the young scout. He closed his eyes and tried to think how he could manage to get away from him. He knew that Burke had good reason to hate him, and that he could make no defense against him.

"Don't shut your eyes, Andrew Gross," said Burke; "keep 'em open, and on me just as long as you can, for I am the last of my race, you know—yes, the last! My parents and brothers are no more. You recollect 'em, don't you?"

Gross made no reply. He stared at the youth and wondered how in the world he could have fallen so easily into his hands.

Suddenly there was another splash in the water, and Burke saw another dark form sink beneath the ledge. But this one dove forward clear to the sandy beach, and then suddenly rose up and glared around him.

"Kit Carson!" yelled Burke, leaping to his feet and rushing forward and grasping his hand.

"Burke, my boy, how are you?" replied the old scout.

"How in the world did you get here?" demanded Burke.

"Followed your trail."

"The deuce!"

"No. I saw you escape from—why, you've got the renegade, have you?"

"Yes, hard and fast!"

"Well, that's good—better than I expected. I saw the Piutes throw him in after you. I understood your trick at once, for I knew you were not the one to drown yourself in that way. So I waited till they left, and then came after you."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RENEGADE SEES HIS FATE.

Burke was overjoyed at having Kit Carson with him. Above all men in the world he was the one he most loved and respected. But at this moment he most needed his services and advice.

"I am so glad you came, Mr. Carson," he said, as the great scout came upon the sandy beach and let the water drip from his buckskin suit. "Where are your gun and horse?"

"My gun is lying up on the rock there."

"Me go get it!" said Mauna, quite eagerly, springing up and running toward the mouth of the cave. She climbed up the cottonwood tree with the nimbleness of the squirrel, and ran over the crest of the rock toward the lake.

"Who is that girl, Burke?" Kit asked.

"The daughter of an Apache chief. Two warriors were carrying her away. I wiped them out—three days ago—and she has been with me ever since. She's as brave as a lion. Will shoot a Piute as quickly as you or I would. Her name is Mauna. I have promised to restore her to her father."

"That was right. I met Hank Mundy at the old cave, and he told me about her. She doesn't like him, it seems."

"No, Hank insulted her. She is high-strung and game."

"I guess so. He is pretty badly hurt, but will get over it. I fixed him all right before I left him. Here she comes now. She ran up with the rifle and handed it to Burke."

"Mauna," said Burke, "this is the great white chief you have heard so much of, Kit Carson. He is my friend and your friend."

Kit took her hand in his and shook it warmly.

"I am glad to see you, Mauna," he said. "My young friend says you are a good and brave girl. I know your father. He is a great chief. We will take you back to him and—"

"Mauna no more go back," she said, interrupting him. "She stay with young white chief and cook his food for him."

Kit looked at Burke, and the young scout returned his gaze unflinchingly.

"What are you going to do now, Burke?" Kit asked of the young scout.

"Keep my oath!" was the reply.

Kit noticed the vengeful flash of his eyes, and then looked at the prostrate form of Andrew Gross. He fully understood his meaning then.

"Where is your horse, Mr. Carson?" Burke asked.

"Up in the woods hereabouts, and yours is there, too."

"Eh! Is that so?"

"Yes."

"I am glad of that. We must leave here to-night."

Kit knew why.

"Yes, we can leave."

"There are four of us, and we have horses enough."

"Have you had any food to-day?" Burke asked.

"Oh, yes."

Burke looked at Mauna and said to her:

"Get the venison. We'll have another lunch. I am hungry."

She got the cured meat, and all three ate quite heartily. Kit said he was not hungry, but would eat just to keep them company.

By this time it was getting so dark that they could scarcely see one another. The sun had ceased to reflect on the waters of the lake, and in a few minutes more it would be pitch dark in there.

Burke got out his tinder-box and struck a light. Mauna ran to the entrance at the foot of the big tree and found plenty of dry fagots. They soon had a good fire going, by means of which Kit Carson dried his clothes, as did Burke also.

Three hours passed, and then Kit knew it was night outside. But Burke went up the cottonwood tree to see about it. He found the stars out and shining brightly in a cloudless sky.

"Yes," he said, "it's night, and time for us to go. Mr. Carson, you go up first and take care of Mr. Gross when he comes up. Here, get up."

He untied Gross' feet and hands and led him toward the entrance of the cave. Gross was unarmed, but Burke and the Indian girl were armed, hence he dared not make any attempt to get away.

Kit Carson went up first, and then Gross followed. Kit took charge of him till Burke came up. Then his hands were tied behind his back securely, after which Burke led him off in search of the horses. They were soon found.

Gross was strapped on one of the Indian ponies so he could not get off in the dark, and then they commenced the march toward the edge of the timber, which they reached in two hours.

"Here's the prairie," said Carson. "We can travel much faster now."

"Yes," said Burke; "and I am glad of it."

When they were all mounted they started off at a brisk pace across the open prairie. Burke led the pony his prisoner bestrode, and Mauna rode behind and kept her eye on him all the time.

By midnight they reached the cave where Hank Mundy was stopping. There they halted, and prepared to remain till morning, as they needed sleep.

Hank was called out and Burke told Mauna that if she did not treat him kindly she would displease him.

She promised to let him alone.

Mundy was astounded at seeing Gross a prisoner in the hands of the little scout.

"You onery renegade skunk," he hissed. "You tried to burn me at the stake onct! I'll get square with you for it, for when Burke Miller gets through with you I'll have a whack at you."

Gross made no reply. He feared to do or say anything that would aggravate them, as he knew he had done too much to expect any mercy at their hands, anyhow.

He was taken off the pony and led into the cave, where he was laid down on the ground and tied so securely that he couldn't even roll over, much less exert any of his limbs. Then they laid down and slept as soundly as tired men could sleep.

With the sun, they were up and eating breakfast, whilst Gross lay on his back in the cave. Burke ate heartily, but gave nothing to his prisoner, nor would he allow anyone else to do so.

The meal over, Burke and Kit Carson invited Hank Mundy to go along with them.

"Where are you going, pards?" the Yankee asked.

"Over to the next timber," replied Kit.

"Yes, I'll go," said Hank.

He mounted his horse with them, and together the party left the cave and went in a southeasterly direction.

Just before sunset they reached the timber. Kit piloted the way still they struck a small clearing, where they stopped.

"Andrew Gross," said Burke, turning to his prisoner, "do you recollect this spot?"

Gross was ashen pale.

"Yes—I—think I do," he replied in a half whisper.

"I am glad you do. It's well that we remember some things. I remember this spot well. I have never forgotten. Here my parents, uncle and brothers, died by starvation, tied to those trees there by you. I have brought you here that you might see it again."

Burke untied his feet from under the pony's belly and then carried him to one of the trees—the one against which the elder Miller was tied and where he died—and tied him securely there.

"Now you can see the whole place," said Burke. "My father and mother, uncle and brothers stood here and gazed on these surroundings and died—as you will die!"

"Are you going to leave me here?" Gross asked, his face paling even more, if possible.

"Oh, no. I will stay here and see that no one interferes with you. I am kind, you see. No wolf shall make a meal of you, and I'll see that you don't get a meal, either."

A groan escaped the renegade. He realized Burke Miller's revenge at that moment.

He was going to let him slowly starve to death there as his parents had starved.

The thought filled him with cowardly fear.

"Burke—I—I—will—do—all I can—to—"

"Never mind," interrupted Burke. "I know you would, but you can't," and he turned away and ordered Mauna to broil some venison steaks at the fire which she and Kit had built about twenty feet from the tree where Gross was tied.

Gross had eaten nothing now in thirty-six hours, and the odor of the broiling venison gave him a ravenous appetite. But the four sat down and ate before him and gave him none!

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

When the renegade fully understood what his fate was to be, then partly realizing the horrors of it by the savory odor of the broiling steak, he broke out in the most horrible imprecations that ever fell from human lips. He called all the curses down on the head of the young scout.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Burke. "Just over there are the graves of my people, Andrew Gross. I found their bones clinging to these trees here a month ago and buried them with Kit Carson's assistance. He heard my vow at that time, and he is here to witness the fulfillment of that vow. Curse me all you can. Your curses will be blessings on my head. The bones of my people cry out for vengeance. They shall hear you beg; laugh at your curses and scoff at your prayers. Don't this steak smell good? It's even better than it smells," and he commenced devouring the steak with a gusto that astonished even Kit and Hank.

The night passed. Burke and Kit divided the watch, and day dawned without any savages putting in an appearance.

Burke broiled savory bear and venison steaks right under the doomed man's nose. He howled and cursed worse than ever. But the little scout quietly sat down before him and ate his breakfast.

"This steak is splendid," he remarked. "I never ate better in my life. Just smell of that, Andrew," and he held a piece within an inch of the doomed wretch's nose.

Snap, snap!

The starving villain snapped at it like a hungry wolf, and, missing it, showered a storm of imprecations at him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Burke. "You are hungry, eh? Take a small nip at this—just a small piece now, for I don't intend you shall have much this time," and he held a piece of steak almost against his lips.

"Snap—ha! Missed! Try it again! If you can catch it you may have it!"

"Curse you! Curse you!" yelled the frantic wretch.

"There, now, try your mouth on this," and he rubbed a piece of greasy bear steak all over his face, even letting him get a taste of it with his tongue.

"By gum!" muttered Hank, "the boy kin beat the Injuns."

"It's tough," remarked Kit, "but the wretch deserves the worst death that can be inflicted. I'm going to see the boy through without a word to move him from his purpose."

"That's my trail, too, pard. The boy has a big bill agin the renegade, an' I'm for lettin' him collect it."

"He'll collect every cent of it, I reckon. He's as firm as the hills. He won't weaken."

The noonday meal came, and the doomed wretch had to endure the misery of seeing it cooked and eaten right under his nose, without a taste of it passing his lips.

Supper came, and he was wild with hunger. He begged, threatened and cursed. Burke rubbed a piece of steak across his mouth, that he might lick his lips with his tongue.

Howls that would have made a wolf angry with envy burst from the renegade, but all in vain. Not a drop of water nor a crumb did he get.

Another night passed, and the wretch looked thin and haggard.

Burke broiled steaks and fish in great quantities before him. He sat on a seat he had made just in front of him, and ate his meals.

"Come, Gross, have a slice of this steak," he would say. "It's rich and juicy, done to a turn, and hot. Just try it, and tell me what you think of it."

And he passed it under his nose.

The wretch snapped at it like a famished wolf.

"Ha! You came near getting it that time. I must be careful, or you'll cheat me yet. Oh, don't that smell good?—yum, yum!"

"Curse you!" shrieked the starving wretch. "May theimps of darkness rend you!"

"Blessings! Blessings!" cried Burke. "Give me some of 'em again. Take another smell and give me another blessing."

Thus the horrible punishment went on from day to day till on the sixth day the wretch was too weak to speak. But Burke Miller never relented. To the last he rubbed pieces of broiled venison on the man's mouth and laughed at him.

Suddenly the renegade gave a great gasping, gurgling sound and died, as Burke yelled in his ear:

"Steaks—hot steaks!"

"There, there," said Kit Carson to him, "it's all over now, Burke. You have kept your vow," and he grasped the little scout's hand and wrung it affectionately. "I am glad it's over."

"Father! Mother!" gasped Burke, looking skyward, "forgive me if I have done wrong. I—wanted—to avenge you."

"You have done no wrong, my young friend," said Kit. "You have avenged your parents, and that was right. I honor you for it."

"That's me, pard," said Hank, "and yer done it bang up, too, yer did."

Burke buried his face in his hands and remained silent a long time. In the meantime Kit and Hank were arranging to leave the spot.

"Come, Burke," said Kit, when they were ready, "we must leave here now. We have been here long enough."

Without uttering a word, the little scout arose and went over to where he and Kit had buried the bones of his parents. There he knelt down in silent prayer for five minutes. Then he arose, flung himself into the saddle, and rode away with Mauna by his side.

Kit Carson led the way, and pretty soon they were out on the prairie. Just a mile or so away they saw a party of Indians.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Mauna. "My father. Him great chief."

"What?" asked Kit. "Is that your father out there, Mauna?"

"Yes, him my father; him great Apache chief."

"Yes, he is a great chief. Go tell him I am here, and that I wish to have a talk with him and smoke the pipe of peace."

"Ugh; me go!" and the delighted girl dashed away on her pony like the brave young Amazon she was.

"Now is your time to get away," cried Kit. "We can never get rid of her any other way. She is in love with Burke and will never leave him. Do you want her, Burke?"

"No!" was the emphatic reply.

"Come on, then."

They turned back in the woods and made their way across to the prairie on the other side, doubling so as to confuse the pursuit.

"Now for the White River settlement, where we can have a few weeks of rest," said Kit, and away they went.

Four days later they found themselves at the home of old Joe Milligan on the White River, where they were welcomed by everyone.

"Oh, Mr. Burke!" exclaimed pretty Bessie, running forward and grasping his hand. "I am so glad to see you! And you too, Mr. Mundy! How can I ever forget your kindness to me?"

They stopped there for a whole month, during which time Burke and Bessie were together every day.

When Kit Carson left to go on his mission as scout for the government, Burke went with him, though he left his heart behind, in the keeping of Bessie Milligan, who had promised to be his wife in another year.

Hank Mundy fell in love with a widow at the settlement and married her. His wife made him stop his roving and settle down on the ranch and attend to business. It was hard for him at first, but he soon got used to it, and made a very good husband. He is now an old man with a troop of grandchildren about him, to whom he frequently relates the story of the "Little Scout and the Doom of the Renegade."

Burke Miller's ranch adjoins Mundy's, and he and Bessie often go over there with their flock of children and talk over the old times, until all the little ones know the story of Kit Carson's Little Scout and the Doom of the Renegade.

THE END.

Read "FROM THE STREET; OR, THE FORTUNES OF AN BOOTBLACK," by N. S. Wood (The Young American Actor), which will be the next number (302) of "Pluck and Luck."

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